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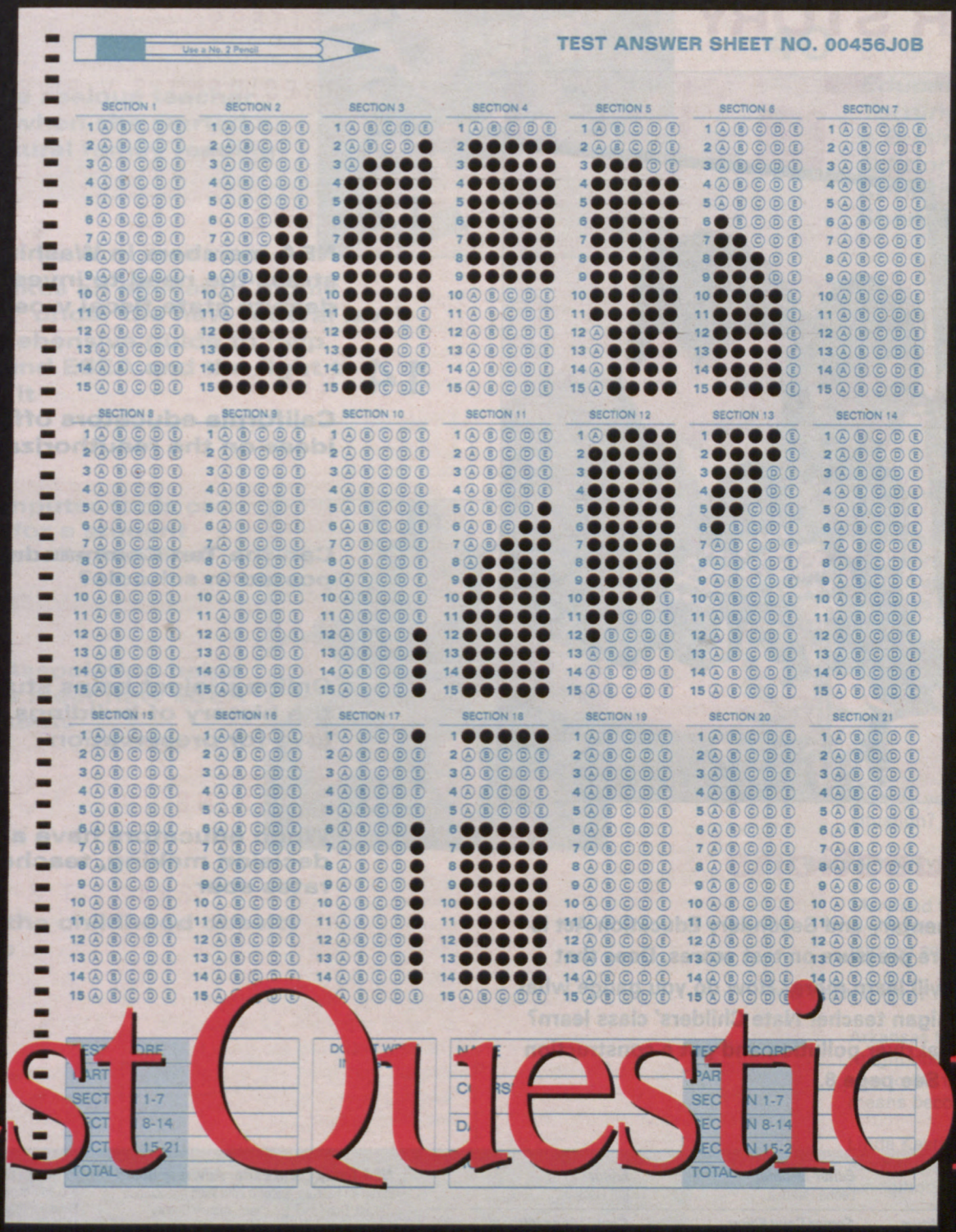
NEA Today

March 2003

The Magazine of the National Education Association

Need a mortgage?
Want a vacation?
Get both! See page 42.



Test Questions

Do better scores equal better learning?

How can a Blue Ribbon school be labeled low-performing?

NEA Today

March 2003

Volume 21 • Number 6

COVER STORY

Test Questions

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act is putting even more pressure on test scores. Does that mean students will learn more? How do you gauge what students in Michigan teacher Nate Childers' class learn? They studied local river pollution and got a construction site shut down! See page 8.

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Making Public Schools Great for Every Child

Cover illustration: Jay Groff. Photos opposite page: Jim West, clockwise from upper left: Dave Eggen, Dan Loftin, Michael Quan, Scott Suchman, Norman Y. Lono.

Letters

DON'T FORGET LIBRARIES

I have been a school library media specialist and member of NEA for 26 years. I was excited to see the cover story of the February 2003 issue. I thought that in articles about encouraging students to read, my role would be mentioned. But it was not.

You managed to fill six pages with articles about books, encouraging reading, and the Read Across America program without once mentioning a library.

Numerous research studies show that schools with well-stocked libraries operated by certified personnel have a positive impact on student learning and on standardized test scores.

It would be nice to see my profession acknowledged.

Brooke E. Anderson
Nashport, Ohio

QUALITY ENVIRONMENT

I am outraged by the letter about least restrictive environment (LRE) in last month's magazine (Letters, February). I teach a high functioning LRE class. My students' disabilities range from severe to moderate mental retardation. I have had some problems with placing my students in other classes. Some of the teachers share the same outlook as the one who wrote the letter titled "Amending Special Ed."

I agree if a child is violent and may harm others that child should be placed in a self-contained room. But the students who are not dangerous need the opportunity to work with their regular peers, so they can learn as much as possible about the academic side of a subject and also learn proper social behavior. Every student should have the right to live as "normally" as possible.

Not only do students with disabilities have to learn to cope with life around regular peers, students without disabilities have to learn to cope with disabled peers. If we restrict anyone, that student will never learn how to live in the world.

Suzanne Wieber
Jackson, Tennessee

ABSTINENCE DEBATE

I commend Elizabeth Bradley for her abstinence-only response to the debate question (Debate, February). I agree with her analogies. We try to encourage students not to drink, smoke, or take part in drug activities; yet, we never try to teach them how to take part in these activities "safely" and without adverse side effects.

In addition to the reasons Bradley listed for abstinence, I would like to add one more—for most sexually active teenagers there will be long-standing emotional heartache over their decision. A girl doesn't have to become pregnant or diseased to experience this emotional pain that could last a lifetime.

Many people want to promote the "safer sex" talk so that we can reduce the number of teen pregnancies. If educators believe that teens aren't old enough or responsible enough to parent young infants and children, what makes us think they're old enough or responsible enough to engage in an activity whose biological purpose is to bring about the next generation?

Shauna Naylor
Montgomery Village, Maryland

I am writing in response to the abstinence-only debate featured in your February issue. The "yes" column written by Elizabeth Bradley contains damaging false analogies that subjectively cloud a current and relevant topic. Her original analogy equates drunk driving to having sex, not to point out the risks of sex but to sway thoughts subjectively.

She later describes teenage sex as "Russian roulette," another example of scare tactics. In her article she clearly doesn't consider any part of a complete sex education program viable, which is close-minded enough, but she over-generalizes and dismisses all sex education programs with her condom-banana reference. Our students are judgmental enough without educators joining their ranks.

Dylan Hartwell
Fairfield, Ohio

I think that Elizabeth Bradley's debate argument is flawed with her analogy about drunk driving. The problem is, there's no fun involved in drunk driving. It's the consequence of drinking without a designated driver. A better analogy would have compared safer sex education with talking to underage students about responsible drinking or drug use.

As a science teacher, I spend a fair amount of time talking about the evils of drug and alcohol use, but that does not keep students from trying the substances.

The bottom line is that if it's fun, they're going to do it regardless of what we tell them. I think there is value in realizing that and giving students safer options while making them aware of the consequences. But without a thorough education, students will not see those consequences.

Alex Hodge
Basalt, Colorado

SPECIAL EDUCATION

I thought the article about the overrepresentation of minorities in special education (January cover story) was extremely well done. It might be helpful to point out some of the reasons why poverty is so highly correlated with mental retardation, reasons such as a lack of adequate prenatal care for the mother, prevalence of low birth weights, effects of alcohol on the fetus, poor nutrition during infancy and early childhood, and a lack of quality day care to provide intellectual stimulation. Schools alone cannot provide all that minority students need for normal cognitive development.

Peggy Walker
Stoughton, Wisconsin

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

I was intrigued by your January 2003 article on the debate over teacher certification requirements (Inside Scoop). In particular, the article defended state certification programs that provide prospective teachers with extensive preparation in pedagogy and educational methods, programs that have come under fire from many people, including education secretary Rod Paige. Perhaps one reason people feel this way is because many teacher certification programs at major universities are complete wastes of time.

I attended a program in Arizona that is a sad example of this trend. While this program offered a single one-credit course on classroom management, I had to take a three-credit linguistics class on different English dialects. The language arts methods classes focused almost entirely on whole language enrichment activities for students who already were proficient readers. The classes offered few direct intervention strategies for struggling readers.

It is disturbing that our profession is being reduced to the point where some say that learning pedagogy is unnecessary. However, much of the blame for these attitudes rests with the certification programs themselves, many of which are neither practical nor relevant to teaching in an actual classroom full of students. The sad fact is that too many preservice teachers must wait until student teaching to learn something that will help them in their careers.

Casey Gagnon
Palm Springs, California

I received "alternative" certification a couple of years ago. My experience and training include more than 20 years in business, government, and adult education; four years as a teacher's assistant; and more clock hours than are required to graduate from a traditional teacher certification program. I belong to two professional organizations and to the union. I read extensively and strive for continuous quality improvement in the classroom. Test scores are up. Students, parents, colleagues, and administrators like my work. Your article says "all students deserve a certified teacher." You should change that to "all students deserve a quality teacher" and start working with the nontraditionals to improve salaries and working conditions for all teachers, instead of using us as scapegoats.

Rich Slettvet
Edmonds, Washington

CHURCH AND STATE

John Draftz argues that the U.S. Constitution does not mention the separation of church and state (Letters, January). Neither is our nation founded on the premise that one brand of Christianity will be an official religion. More specifically, our Constitution guarantees freedom of worship to all religions and the right to practice no religion.

Mr. Draftz also makes the outlandish statement that "religion is... expected to influence the state." I certainly hope that is not the case. One can be moral without beholding to the trappings of religion.

In my world history class I discuss the Egyptian religion, the Babylonians, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity. I also point out Martin Luther's and Miguel

Hidalgo's criticisms of the Catholic Church. I certainly do not bring my own religious values to the classroom because I teach in a public school where my policy is that all creeds are equal.

Gerald Lunderville
Long Beach, California

RESPONSIBLE LEARNING

In her letter, Judith Valen writes "why should they [children] respect education" in regard to the lack of voter support for public education and state government's failure to prioritize educational funding (Letters, January). Her statement is a philosophical cop-out and an excuse for student apathy and irresponsibility. It is the child's responsibility to see that education is his future and the parent's responsibility to guide and explain the value of an education. If the educational forum is old or dilapidated, children still can learn and seek information, improve their writing, practice their reading, and compute mathematics. Put the child and the parents back into the equation and berate others for not improving the environment of our students.

William Recker
Grand Rapids, Michigan

STUDENT SUCCESS

It was a pleasure to read your article "How To Advance Minority Students" (Learning, January) about the tireless work of Roy Márquez, one of the most patient and well-respected teachers I have collaborated with during my 36 years as a teacher, 30 of those at Garfield High School.

I have worked with both Jaime Escalante and Roy Márquez, and I always have felt more comfortable with the efforts of Márquez. Even though both men are great motivators and unselfish givers, Escalante emphasizes memorization of problem-solving methods through repetitive drills, while Márquez emphasizes critical thinking through open-ended explorations, as stated in your article. Escalante's approach limits itself to the study of calculus, while Márquez's approach lets students use their thinking skills in other disciplines, including life's ever-present challenges.

Michael Litvak
Pasadena, California

PENSION PROTECTION

It amazes me that all of us who have worked in public service will not be able to collect the Social Security benefits that we paid for in other careers. For 10 years I was a teacher in Florida, paying into both Social Security and the Florida retirement system. Currently I am teaching in Maine. From what I understand about the offset laws, I will lose on both accounts. In addition, I am not even entitled to my husband's Social Security benefits.

I am not asking for anything other than a return on my required contributions into the Social Security and retirement funds for the past 25 years. When state retirement plans and federal laws conflict with the rights of all citizens, it is time to take a stand and say enough is enough.

I urge you to stand up for the rights of all educators and public servants across the country. It is time for NEA to take the lead to repeal the GPO and WEP laws.

Stephanie Knight
Falmouth, Maine

I appreciate the few articles that have been printed in recent issues of *NEA Today* regarding the Social Security offset laws. I would like to see an in-depth article updating readers on the progress NEA has made in working toward the passage of two bills (one in the House and one in the Senate) known as the Social Security Fairness Act of 2001. The bills seek to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

What is NEA doing to ensure that these bills will have the required amount of cosponsors to get them out of committee and onto the floor of the House and Senate? How many more years will pass before retirees affected by these laws begin to receive the full Social Security benefits they have earned? NEA needs to make our plight a priority.

Mary Ella Bergmann
Bridgeton, New Jersey

[Editor's note: NEA is actively soliciting support in Congress for measures to repeal the GPO and WEP. At press time, Senator Feinstein (D-CA) in the Senate and Representatives McKeon (R-CA) and Berman (D-CA) in the House had indicated that they intend to reintroduce the Social Security Fairness Act in the new 108th Congress, but bill numbers had not yet been assigned. Check www.nea.org/lac for updates.]

CORRECTION

In the January issue Debate (page 19), the photographs of the debaters were inadvertently switched.

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of four ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday, click on "Reader Services," and fill in the "Letter to the Editor" section.
- By e-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By fax: 202/822-7206

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

President's Viewpoint

BY REG WEAVER

ESEA: The Stakes Just Got Higher

Purported education reform—the recently reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—is in many instances, a murky and misleading piece of legislation. But two things are crystal clear to me about ESEA:

- It embodies much that we as education professionals have historically espoused, but were unable to mandate or fund;
- This legislation, as it is currently crafted, sets up children and public schools to fail.

NEA's 2.7 million members have never wanted anything less than a highly qualified professional in every classroom and high standards and expectations for students and for ourselves. But how do you craft and implement an education reform plan without the expertise of educators who will implement it? You can't.

By setting admirably high goals without providing crucial resources to already cash-strapped state and local governments, Washington has built a house of cards—and it is now blowing those cards down on top of the very students it claims to shelter.

"Washington has built a house of cards."

We know that using high-stakes tests as a measure of "accountability" is a fundamentally flawed concept. The Center on Education Policy recently reported that "state-of-the-art in testing is not yet reliable or consistent enough for year-to-year changes in scores to always be an accurate reflection of progress. Studies suggest that as much as 70% of the year-to-year fluctuations are due to outside factors."

Outside factors such as hunger and homelessness; abuse and neglect, are factors for which neither we nor our students should be held accountable, yet we will.

Local newspapers are rife with stories about test scoring mistakes. *The Boston Globe* recently reported on Jennifer Mueller, a high school senior in Massachusetts who convinced state officials to accept an alternative method she used to correctly answer a high-stakes math question. Her persistence ensured that 449 seniors are now eligible to graduate. Yet Mueller remains ineligible, because her score fell just below the minimum to pass.

That fact alone should be revealing as well as chilling to parents, students, and teachers.

But perhaps what's most insulting is that relying on high-stakes tests is an assault on our professionalism. Teaching to the test is the very antithesis of teaching. Our background and experience—and a student's talents and abilities—are oftentimes diminished when tied to a high-stakes test.

Obviously, I'm not against testing. Used correctly, it's a tool to assess student progress. But used to determine promotion, graduation, college placement, and scholarships, testing becomes a weapon.

We must ensure that tests are appropriately used and aligned with curriculum. Otherwise our children will be robbed of their thirst for knowledge and mindlessly memorize "facts" without a true understanding of their genesis.

Let's work together to ensure that policy makers recognize and respond to the fact that high-stakes tests are not the answer. They must ensure that we measure student performance to assess their needs, not to predetermine their fates.

Highly qualified teachers and education support professionals, high standards and expectations, small class sizes, environments conducive to good teaching and learning will set children, students, and public education on the road to greater successes.

Our job as educators has just gotten a lot more difficult. We can't just focus on our classrooms and our students; we must also focus on our policy makers to ensure that they know how accountability should look.

My friends, the stakes just got higher!

Comments? E-mail Reg Weaver at RegWeaver@nea.org.

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Making Public Schools Great for Every Child

Focus on Finance

Information and helpful tips on managing your money – brought to you by NEA Member Benefits.

Taming the bear and the bull

Amidst the ups and downs of the stock market, it's hard to know the best way to manage your current investments and retirement savings. Don't get discouraged—here are three steps to help lead you to long-term stability.

1. Develop an asset allocation plan of stocks, bonds, equities, and companies. Diversifying your investments helps lessen losses from one area. Make sure the plan fits your needs and that you're comfortable with the risk level. Choose a mix of safe and higher risk options. If you have other sources of income for your retirement, then you may be able to be more aggressive.

2. If you're a young investor, you probably have more time to take on greater risks, since there's time for your investments to grow.

If you're an older investor who plans on retiring soon, being more conservative can help protect the savings that you've earned. By adjusting a segment of your portfolio, you may be able to make up for prior losses and prepare for future loss.

3. If your needs have changed and you have to sell off some investments, you should have valid reasons that support your decision. Determine how much you can afford to lose and how your portfolio will be affected. Sometimes it makes sense to hold on to poor performers because they may do well in the future. Keep in mind, that if an investment has done well in this market, it may not do well in the future. So if you do buy, don't buy too much.

Find time to give your investments a thorough examination. Why not meet with a financial advisor to learn more about your portfolio. This could make it easier to determine when to buy, when to sell, and when to diversify – all decisions that could help lead to a happy and wealthy retirement.

Keep Your Name Clean

About 86% of your trash contains information that could be useful to identity thieves. Follow this simple precautionary timeline and you can prevent having your identity stolen and protect your good name.

Daily: When placing an order online make sure the site's server is secure; and never leave your purse or wallet unattended or in your car.

Weekly: Destroy all personal information including credit card and bank account receipts preferably with a shredder; destroy any pre-approved credit offers you don't intend to accept; and don't dispose of all your garbage in the same place.

Monthly: Review your credit card and bank statements for unusual activity.

Annually: When reordering checks, have them printed without your Social Security Number and drivers license number; choose, use, and memorize different passwords for each of your accounts; and order free credit reports from the three credit bureaus to review your credit status.

Savings you can bank on

It's hard to find the right bank these days due to the sheer numbers – ranging from online banks, to national chains, credit unions, and small local banks – and the variety of accounts they offer. Look for a bank that has branches or ATMs near your school or home, or one that offers free use of ATMs and online access. Don't forget to look closely at fees for services you use.

Be aware of monthly charges and fees for going below the minimum balance, but also fees for ATM use (theirs and other banks'), and overdraft protection. No-frills checking can help you save with no minimum balance and low fees, but you may pay for every check you write, for using a live teller, and even making balance inquiries. With interest-bearing NOW accounts, watch out for high balance requirements, and compare interest rates to savings or money market accounts.

The right bank is probably the one that will present you with the lowest bill at the end of the month – after all, banks are meant for saving, not spending!

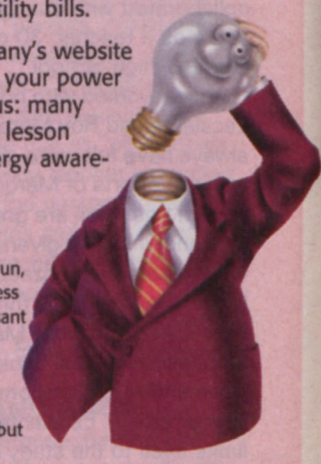
Energy bill buster

Take this quick quiz about how to cut your utility bills down to size.

1. Using fluorescent bulbs instead of incandescent and halogen bulbs can cut your lighting bill each year by:
a. $10-$20 **b.** about $50 **c.** $100 or more

2. True or false: Old showerheads use more than twice as much water as new ones.

3. Fill in the blank: Heating and cooling a home accounts for about ___% of domestic utility bills.



Check your local power company's website for even more ways to reduce your power consumption. Classroom bonus: many power companies offer online lesson plans and materials about energy awareness and safety.

Answers:

1. c. Fluorescent bulbs are cheaper to run, last much longer, and also give off less heat, which makes them more pleasant in summer. So spend a little more on bulbs to save a lot in bills.
2. True - Old showerheads use up to 6 gallons of water per minute (gpm), but since January 1995, they have been designed for flows of 2.5 gpm or less.
3. 50% or more of the energy most households use goes to heating and cooling. Drop those thermostats and you'll have lots of extra money to buy sweaters!

The best direction for your plastic

Chances are you've recently received a credit card offer in the mail or online. Here are a few tips to help you decide if it's worthwhile to get a new card. Start by comparing the rates with the cards you already have, and check if they are fixed (rates that don't change) or variable (rates that fluctuate).

Decide how you plan on using the card. If you revolve your balances and make minimum payments each month, then check out offers for balance transfers and cash advances. These offers usually have low rates that could help you save a great deal on high-interest payments. If you never carry a balance, then take advantage of cards with built-in rewards options where you can redeem cash, merchandise and air travel for every dollar you charge. They may come with higher rates and annual fees.

To avoid any surprises, remember to read all the legal information on every credit card offer you receive, especially the fine print.

Payback is fair play

Now thanks to the Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002, full-time educators can deduct up to $250 from their adjusted gross income each year for expenses like books, supplies, and computer equipment used in the classroom. Visit www.irs.gov for more information.

Frugal Family Fun

For free online info on lots of fun activities that cost less than you think take a look at these sites. Sample local flavor by checking out all kinds of festivals near and far – festivals.com
Find vacation tips including packing suggestions, parent-to-parent support, and tons of ideas at family.go.com/travel For an old-fashioned approach to low-cost family activities like crafts and recipes, visit seedsofknowledge.com

Charity Chat

Deciding which charity(ies) your family would like to support can be overwhelming, since so many are in need of time and money. Consider creating your own mission statement such as, "We want to help women get preventative mammograms." This way, your altruism will be aligned with your views.

Sources:
www.southernco.com, www.pge.com, www.irs.gov, www.victimsassistanceofamerica.org, www.your-creditreport.com, www.idtheftcenter.org, Stages, Autumn 2002

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Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET

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AVNT0303

Taking Away the Fun

High-stakes testing is putting some of the most meaningful class experiences in jeopardy.

BY AFIE MIRSHAH-NAYAR

Fifteen years ago I received my high school diploma in the same Maryland school district where I now teach. Not a day goes by when I do not think about the changes that have since occurred in education. Students are tested mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially in ways I never could have conceived in my day. Yet in one fundamental way, they remind me of myself when I was young.

The students I teach are English-language learners. As a child of Iranian immigrants I, too, was once trying to learn and assimilate to a new language and culture. I remember a teacher named Mrs. McDonald who stayed with my sister and me during recess and taught us with flash cards. Nowadays the art of teaching English to second language learners is serious business, and with the trend toward more frequent and demanding testing, it's getting more serious than ever—and in my view, at great cost.

Scott Suchman

Consider who I teach. These students come to Montgomery County from more than 150 countries and speak at least 120 different languages. They enroll in our school system with varying levels of English language proficiency and, in high school, range in age from 14 to 19 years old. Coming from mostly Hispanic backgrounds with non-English-speaking parents, they must grapple with trying to become fluent in a new language (academic fluency can take five to seven years), a new culture, and a new academic framework. Meanwhile, they are held to the same state standards and requirements as their American-born, English-speaking classmates.

In this way my students are already more vulnerable to failure than their peers. Now, they have to endure shifts in my own teaching—from the practical life skills I love to impart and which they seem to value, to a strict, by-the-book curriculum geared almost solely to helping them pass these new tests.

For me this shift has been a necessity. Tests have been a burgeoning fact of life for years, but demands are getting stiffer with the introduction of the Maryland High School Assessments—five tests that stress higher-order thinking and significantly more writing than previous tests. Passing these tests are currently slated to be a requirement for graduation.

Having to "teach to the test" does not motivate me, but many of my kids will not go on to four-year colleges after high school because of the financial burden and a lack of academic fluency, and a high school diploma will be vital for their working futures. I have decided, then, I must do everything I can to ensure they are successful.

But I am troubled because I know that certain lessons that can benefit these students will have to be pushed to the back burner. In government, for example, we study economics, which deals with topics such as the Federal Reserve and monetary and fiscal policy. Yet I've long felt that topics such as balancing a checkbook and using credit cards are important to my students, so I've taught these, too. But no longer.

I fear similar changes will have to be made to other supplemental lessons. To buttress our studies on a novel about the Vietnam War, for example, I took my students to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in nearby Washington, D.C. There they were able to see pictures and read letters left by families and friends. The experience dramatically brought home how the death of so many soldiers impacted a nation. It was powerfully moving—just as was our trip to the White House. Here was a spectacular way of reinforcing many of the things I'd taught about the executive branch. My kids saw firsthand where it all happens, had fun, and became motivated to learn more. Just being able to go inside so easily taught them a surprising lesson about open governments. Frankly, it was one of the most meaningful experiences we'd had as a class. But such trips may have to take a back seat to test preparation which, after all, must be the top priority.

Is there a middle ground? I believe there is, for testing is hardly all bad news. It brings accountability to teachers and schools and helps targets those having problems with curriculum and instruction. Also, the rigor in preparing for these tests can inspire students and teachers to raise standards and expectations.

My idea: Use well-thought-out, comprehensive tests as incentives for students to strive higher, rather than as punitive measures. Students who are able to pass the tests receive extra accreditation along with their diplomas. Meanwhile valuable data—about where students need improvement, about which schools and teachers may need professional development—could be used to guide educational strategy.

In the end, the assessments would not penalize any student, including immigrants. A student's fear of failure would be replaced by a genuine desire to achieve. To me, this is the best of both worlds. ✔

Afie Mirshah-Nayar is an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher at Albert Einstein High School in Kensington, Maryland.

Photographs have always been prominent in *NEA Today*.

It's important that nearly every story carry with it a face, so you can connect the words with real people, the 2.7 million members of NEA.

Most of our photographs are taken by freelance photographers or photographers on the staffs of newspapers and magazines whom we hire to provide photos for particular stories. So, over the course of a year, we procure photos from several hundred photographers.

Bill Fischer
editor

Over *NEA Today's* 20-year history, we've found some excellent photographic talent across the United States.

On page 14, you'll find photos by Bob Riha Jr., who started shooting for *NEA Today* in the 1980s. Bob's photos appear on a regular basis in *USA Today*.

Scott Suchman, based here in Washington, D.C., is another long-time contributor of photos to this magazine. Scott is a resident photographer for the Kennedy Center. His photos appear regularly in *Baltimore* magazine.

The photo to the left of this column is an example of Scott's work as are the photos in the "Reading" section, page 23.

We're always interested in fresh talent—in both photography and graphic illustration. We're also looking to hire a greater number of minority freelance photographers and illustrators to handle our assignments.

The field of photojournalism still tends to be dominated by white males, but in the last five years or so we've been pleased to be able to display more of the work of minority and female photographers on the pages of *NEA Today*.

This is important because telling the story of our diverse public schools through pictures requires being able to see photos from many different perspectives.

Bill Fischer

High-Stakes *Que*

Do high-stakes tests boost student achievement? Can good schools be labeled 'low-performing'?

Which of the following is true?

(a) If the President of the United States says a school is great, it won't be put on a list of failing schools.

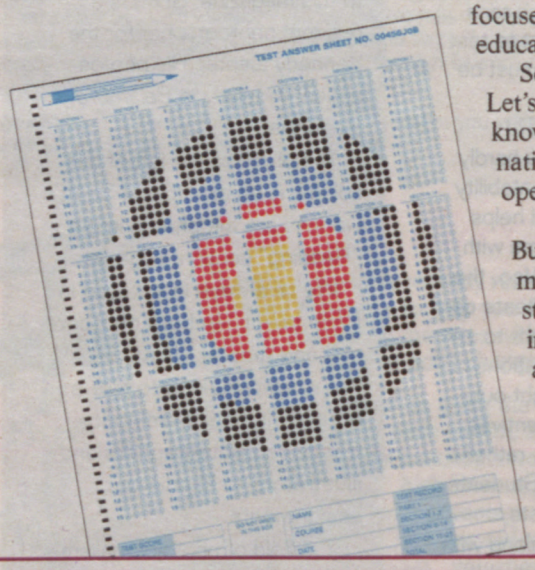
(b) If the U.S. Department of Education says a school is exemplary, it won't be put on a list of failing schools.

(c) If a school is succeeding in imparting both factual information and critical thinking skills to a diverse student body, it won't be put on a list of failing schools.

(d) A nationwide scientific experiment conducted over two decades has shown that high-stakes tests do not improve student achievement.

You won't be graded on this, but it's a very high-stakes question, because the new federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) mandates a testing regime that impacts every school.

"Every teacher knows tests have a role to play," says NEA Student Achievement Director Stephanie Fanjul. "Teachers use tests all the time, including standardized tests. We want to be sure our students are learning and growing. But there are lots of ways that we collect that information, not just tests. Almost never does a bubble sheet reflect back the breadth of what a child understands. When tests are punitive, all the attention is focused on the scores. That doesn't help us educate our children."



So now let's try to answer our question. Let's see...as experienced test takers, we know we can improve our chances by eliminating clearly wrong answers. This is an open-Web test, so let's do some research.

Checking out (a), we learn that President Bush, touring the country last May to promote the new federal education law, stopped at Vandenberg Elementary School in Southfield, Michigan, and said, "This is a successful school....This school doesn't quit on kids, and that's why it's heralded for its excellence." A few weeks later, Vandenberg found itself on the Michigan low-performing schools list.

For (b), we discover that *USA Today* found 19 U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon exemplary schools on low-performing lists.

Let's try (c). We investigate Hart Middle School in Rochester Hills, Michigan, a vibrant learning environment—and a Blue Ribbon winner. It, too, did not escape the low-performer list (see "Blue Ribbon or Below Par?" page 9).

That leaves (d), which seems the least likely answer—except that it's true.

Scientists at Arizona State University announced last December results of the most comprehensive study ever conducted of high-stakes testing. High-stakes testing, they concluded, does not improve student achievement.

The Arizona researchers took advantage of the fact that a giant experiment on high-stakes tests had been inadvertently conducted for the last 20 years: 28 states adopted high-stakes tests, while the others did not.

So the scientists posed a simple question: How did student achievement change when states put on the high-stakes pressure? Did students in high-stakes states improve more or less than students in the states that left student assessment mostly to local educators?

For an answer, the researchers looked at results on several national tests, including the reading and math tests of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which are given to random samples of students under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education and are widely accepted as the nation's best measure of achievement. The Arizona scientists also looked at SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement scores.

"The data presented in this study suggest that after the implementation of high-stakes tests, nothing much happens," researchers Audrey Amrein and David Berliner reported. "No consistent effects across states were noted. Scores seemed to go up or down in a random pattern."

There was actually a small tendency for states that adopted high-stakes testing to improve less on national tests than states that avoided the high-stakes pressure. But in most high-stakes testing states, the public impression has been that the tests work. That's because scores on the

ESEA Testing Timeline

2002-03
Using a federal formula applied to 2001-02 state test results, each state calculates a percentage of students who should score "proficient" in reading and math this year. Each school must meet this target for all students and for each subgroup of students. In many states, officials say most schools are below their targets. Schools have two years to reach the target. (For schools that fell short of state targets for two or more years under the old federal law, the new law says penalties are supposed to have started this year.)

2003-04
Schools strive to make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), enough to reach the target by 2004-05.

2004-05
States must raise the target percentage of "proficient" students even higher. Title I schools that have not made AYP for two years are to get extra help. Also, they must offer students the choice of transferring to other public schools and must pay for transportation.

2005-06
Annual testing in reading and math is now required in each of grades 3-8 and at least once in grades 10-12. Title I schools that have not made AYP for three years must offer supplemental services such as tutoring.

2006-07
Title I schools that have not made AYP for four years must take "corrective action," ranging from hiring an outside expert to replacing some staff members.

2007-08
States must again raise the target percentage of students who score "proficient." (These test score targets go up in equal increments to reach 100 percent in 2014.) Meanwhile, annual testing in science begins.

June 30, 2008
The law expires or (more likely) is reauthorized by Congress with changes.

stions

high-stakes tests themselves generally did improve, so state officials were able to claim success.

But the higher scores were apparently due to the enormous amounts of time and effort that schools poured into teaching the content and exact wording patterns that students would see on those particular tests. The improvement did not carry over into better performance on other tests of the same general content—they did not reflect real gains in learning.

MORE DROP-OUTS

In a second study, the Arizona researchers studied what happened to drop-out rates and graduation rates when states adopted high-stakes graduation tests.

The results were disturbing. Graduation rates fell. Drop-out rates rose.

Further investigation revealed that the reason wasn't just that students got discouraged or fled the pressure. The researchers found that some administrators encouraged low-achieving students to leave school, probably to improve their schools' scores.

The twin studies were funded by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice, a collaborative of NEA state affiliates in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The studies were then reviewed by independent research scientists.

The results of these studies are consistent with earlier, more limited scientific assessments of high-stakes testing in Texas and Massachusetts.

High-stakes tests "result in narrowing the curriculum," says study co-author David Berliner. "People are doing anything they can to achieve the scores they need. They're not teaching students to transfer knowledge, but just to answer questions like those on the state test. They're not preparing

continued on next page

2008-09
Title I schools that have not achieved AYP for six years must reopen as charter schools, replace staff, hire private managers, or give control to the state.

2010-11
States once again raise the percentage of students who must score "proficient" in each school and in each subgroup of students.

June 2014
Every student in America is "proficient."

Blue Ribbon Or Below Par?

A great school gets a bad label

Educators at the Hart Middle School in Michigan were delighted last May when they learned they had won the coveted Blue Ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education.

But the euphoria crashed at the first staff meeting of the new school year when the principal broke the news that Hart was also on a list of low-performing schools. "We were all just floored," says science teacher Nate Childers. "There was a lot of anger. How could this happen?"

Hart wasn't the only school with this strange Blue Ribbon/low-performer rating. *USA Today* conducted a partial survey of schools on low-performing lists and found 19 Blue Ribbon schools among them—19 schools singled out for excellence and then told they were below par and must shape up or face punishment. Ten of the 19 were in Michigan.

Hart fully deserved its Blue Ribbon. It does an outstanding job of educating a highly diverse student body, which includes children of millionaires and children from a trailer park.

Photos by Jim West

The hard work of science teacher Nate Childers (bottom) and colleagues won Hart Middle School a national Blue Ribbon award last year, but the school still landed on a low-performer list.

Each week, two or three teachers go out to the trailer park after school to work with students there. Hart also has a Saturday school for students who need extra help. Parent involvement is strong.

Hart has solid school programs across the board. There's an active school choir, and the faculty recently installed climbing walls in the gym to challenge students.

And the academic program is top of the line. Science teacher Childers, for example, takes his students to a local river every year to monitor pollution. One year, they discovered a spike in their readings, traced the pollution to a construction site, and got it shut down—an unforgettable learning experience for eighth graders.

"This is not a simulation," notes Childers. "They're doing real science."

Support professionals were among those interviewed by the federal evaluator during the Blue Ribbon competition. They, too, play a key role in building the educational environment.

But the low-performing label has nothing to do with unforgettable learning experiences or sound educational environments. It's attached to any school that doesn't meet test score standards.

More than 40 percent of Michigan schools were on last year's low-performer lists, more than in any other state. Why? Because for last year's list, the new federal law rested on old state standards. Michigan had extremely tough standards, intending them as targets that schools should shoot for. Michigan not only required that students score high, but also that the scores rise each year. Although Hart students scored high, scores didn't rise enough—ironically in science—to meet the requirement.

Now that the stakes are higher, Michigan and some other states with high standards have decided to relax them in an effort to shrink the low-performer list. Hart Middle School is off the hook—for now.

But the first year's results from the new federal law are just a taste of things to come. State education officials are predicting even more schools will land on low-performer lists when the new law reaches a new phase of implementation in the 2004-05 school year (see accompanying story).

Meanwhile, after *USA Today* released its list of 19 Blue Ribbon "low performers," the federal Department of Education took steps to avoid a repeat. In the future, getting a Blue Ribbon will depend on test scores.

students for other tests that measure the broader curriculum."

Up until now, Berliner said, high-stakes testing has impacted low-income and minority students most heavily. The study found that states adopting high-stakes tests tended to have more of these students than states that steered clear of these tests.

37 WAYS TO FAIL

Under ESEA, state education planners are predicting that huge numbers of schools will begin showing up on low-performer lists in the 2004-05 school year.

Over the past few months, these officials have been examining the test scores of their schools to project how many are likely to run afoul of the new law, and many of these estimates have been made public. Many states expect that a majority of their schools will bear the low-performer label by 2004-05. Louisiana is predicting 85 percent; North Carolina, 60 percent; Massachusetts, close to half. Under the law, these schools will be eligible for extra help. But they will also be subjected to escalating penalties (see timeline on pages 8 and 9).

The high numbers are the result of two major provisions of the federal law.

One provision specifies that every state must set test score targets such that at least 20 percent of its students start out in schools that are below par.

The test score targets for each state are being calculated this year. Schools will have until the 2004-05 school year to hit these targets before they start suffering penalties.

The second provision applies the same test score standards, not just to the whole school, but to every major subgroup in the school: special education students, each racial or ethnic group, English-language learners, and low-income students. The idea is that a school should not be able to hide the low scores of a disadvantaged minority by averaging them in with a larger number of affluent, high-scoring students.

Will this help students? Texas has already been using a similar accountability system (see *NEA Today*, March 2002 issue, page 8) and has found that the gap between minority and white students' scores on the state test shrank. But a RAND institute study by Stephen Klein, Laura Hamilton, Daniel McCaffrey, and Brian Stecher, published in October 2000, showed that the achievement gap in NAEP scores actually got slightly larger.

Besides holding each subgroup of students to the same standard as the entire student body, ESEA also requires that at least 95 percent of students in each subgroup must take the test. If any group misses the target test score in either reading or math, in any of the grades tested, or if fewer than 95 percent in any group don't take the test, the whole school fails.

A study for the Council of Chief State School Officers calculated that a school could have up to 18 test score targets to reach in each grade tested. Adding other requirements in the law, the council's study counted 37 separate opportunities to fail in each grade.

The reasoning behind the new federal law is that high-stakes pressure will force schools to pull themselves up. The predictions released by state education officials, however, indicate they are bracing for the worst.

Many state planners believe, on the basis of current test scores, that many schools where the student body as a whole reaches the target scores will "fail" because one or more subgroups in one or more grades misses the target. This is why they project that the number

The tape made by Portland students was a life-changing event for them. Would it boost test scores?

The Straitjacket of Standardized Tests

A Portland teacher wonders: Where is the standardized test that can measure passion for learning, respect for others, and human empathy?

BY TOM MCKENNA

When I first met Sol Shapiro he was in his 80s, living alone in a retirement home. He was the first person my Portland high school history class interviewed for an oral history project about old South Portland, Oregon. My students were primarily African American. Sol was Jewish. They were young. He was old. Neither was really excited about the encounter.

We met in Sol's apartment. The interview began.

"My name is Sol Shapiro. I am very familiar with old South Portland." Silence. Quietly, almost imperceptibly, Sol began to weep. My students were stunned. They turned off the video camera. Soon Felicia ventured to place her hand on Sol's shoulder, "It's OK, Mr. Shapiro, we understand."

Tom Story

Arizona researcher Audrey Amrein

of "failing" schools will be much higher than 20 percent in 2004-05.

And after 2004-05, the lists are predicted to get even longer because the law requires that the target be raised every two or three years on a steep path that reaches 100 percent proficiency in the year 2014. The California Department of Education recently projected its results and found that by 2014, 98 percent of its schools will flunk.

To avoid this high failure rate, some states are starting to lower their standard of what is "proficient" so more schools can meet the federal targets. But many states don't want to go that route. California, for example, decided not to alter its standards despite that expected 98 percent failure rate.

Then there's the issue of funding—hint: Current levels won't improve any school's chance of success. Despite the new rules that apply to every public school under ESEA, the federal share of education costs remains about 8 percent, and the President's proposed budget for the 2003-04 school year provides for no overall increase—it actually cuts ESEA by $90 million. A recent study in New Hampshire estimated that the new law will cost $575 per student, but the federal government will only provide $77.

"This whole situation demonstrates that you can't build a good accountability system from afar," says NEA Student Achievement Director Stephanie Fanjul. "It has to be created on the ground, by teachers and support professionals in partnership with the families, and with school boards and superintendents, all focused on the goal of helping our children learn.

"Our members have wholeheartedly supported accountability systems developed in that way. People in their communities know best how to meet their challenges, and government at its best facilitates that process. It doesn't dictate from Washington." ✔

—Alain Jehlen

For More: See the Arizona studies at www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/EPRU/epru_2002_Research_Writing.htm, and the RAND study at www.rand.org/publications/IP/IP202.

Sol cleared his throat, removed his glasses, and dabbed his tears. "Excuse me, please," he said. "I'm very sorry." He rose and left the room. My students looked at me with puzzled expressions. "What do we do now?"

We waited. After a few minutes, Sol returned. He started sharing artifacts from his life with us, a steady stream of photographs, letters, and religious pieces, each accompanied by a tale from his past. Students came to class the next day with a new outlook on old people.

Unfortunately, given the demands of current educational "reform," teachers who want to give their students this kind of indelible learning experience are finding it more and more difficult to do.

We feel pressured to prepare students to do well on high-stakes, standardized tests. These tests have become the measure of our students' learning. Clearly, the tests threaten to define the way we teach. In a world enriched with difference, the hidden curriculum of much of this "reform" is singularity, sameness, and compliance.

What could a multiple-choice test reveal about what my students learned in the South Portland project? Lives changed. Students were moved to social action. They sat in an orthodox synagogue with yarmulkes on their heads and learned about Judaism. They became passionate experts on urban renewal.

Oral history can be a powerful classroom tool. Out of necessity, students acquire valuable skills in pursuit of learning that matters. They formulate questions for interviews. They work collectively to solve problems that threaten to derail hours of work. Text needs to be written and written well. Discovery leads to questions, and research is needed to find answers to those questions. Research leads to surprise, surprise breeds excitement, excitement spills over into passion.

Tom McKenna

James never missed history class. Often, he had to sneak in and out of my room to hide from the dean because he rarely attended his other classes. He was our number one cameraman and interviewer. Jennifer uncovered a quote from a neighborhood meeting, long lost in dusty boxes, that moved her to angry tears. History came alive for her when she read the comment of a state official about the people who would be moved by urban renewal: "Frankly, we don't give a damn about the renters."

The result of our work was a 30-minute documentary about South Portland and the urban renewal that destroyed it. We were invited to show it at the Portland Art Museum auditorium. I got there early and stood outside to help direct my students and their families to a facility where none had ever been, in a part of town where few ever ventured.

About 250 people attended our premiere that night. The students deftly answered questions and talked extensively about their experience. Afterward, students, their families, and former residents of South Portland gathered at my home. Students commandeered my stereo, and their music boomed throughout the house. I went to turn it down, but stopped when I saw what was going on in my living room. Dancing hand in hand were two groups of people about as different as I could imagine and who, when I first approached them about getting together, resisted the idea. Young, old, African-American, Jewish were joined together in a celebration of each other and of the new understanding that our project helped them achieve. They embraced the differences that once kept them apart.

Find me the standardized test that can measure the meaning of that embrace.

Tom McKenna (tmckenna@pps.k12.or.us) is the Social Studies Coordinator for Portland Public Schools. This article is adapted from a story originally published in *The Oregonian*. Names have been changed.

'Keep the Commitment!'

The recession may be battering school finances, but Washington state NEA members stress the need to invest fully in children's future.

These aren't the best of times for Nikki Andres, a third-year elementary teacher in Vancouver, Washington. When she ponders the rigors imparted by her state's "accountability microscope," her $30,000 salary, and her governor's pledge to close a $2.4 billion budget deficit by "suspending" funding for ballot initiatives on class-size reduction and school employee annual COLA—both overwhelmingly passed by voters—she has but one slim consolation. She doesn't teach across the Columbia River in neighboring Oregon.

In these, the worst fiscal times to hit states since World War II, hard-pressed Oregon districts are closing or consolidating schools, boosting class sizes, cutting programs, laying off staff, and gearing up to slash calendars anywhere from two days up to a month.

And farther down the West Coast, California districts are feeling the heat of their state's fiscal inferno, a projected $34 billion deficit over the remainder of this fiscal year and into FY 2004.

Sadly, Nikki Andres will see fiscal pain most places she looks—maybe even your district.

Two-thirds of states reported declining revenues, and more than half faced expenditures that exceeded levels projected in their FY 2003 budgets, in the most recent survey conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures. For public employees, these numbers translate into everything from "across-the-board" cuts in South Carolina and Virginia to teacher/ESP layoffs in Idaho, Kentucky, and Oklahoma.

But Andres, like many of NEA's 2.7 million members, is asking hard questions about politicians' recession-driven fiscal decisions, such as severely underfunding rigid education mandates while widening corporate tax loopholes at a time when voters support public education more than ever and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is predicting a national shortage of 10 million well-trained, skilled workers by 2010.

> **"Teachers and ESPs need to stand up for kids and the future—if we don't do it now, when?"**
>
> —Third-year elementary teacher Nikki Andres

Andres, who teaches first grade at Vancouver's Sarah J. Anderson Elementary, sympathizes deeply with the plight of Washington state's many unemployed workers, but knows that her work with young minds is a vital investment in future employment.

Andres notes that the Washington State Constitution—not slated to be "suspended" like class size and COLA initiatives—clearly states: "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders."

Even during times of fiscal duress, "we need to keep that commitment" to children, Andres stresses. "Teachers and ESPs need to stand up for kids and the future—if we don't do it now, when?"

That's why this third-year teacher joined with thousands of Washington Education Association (WEA) members from more than 100 districts, parents, and community members to march and rally on January 14 in Spokane, Kennewick, and Olympia. They called on the state to "keep the commitment" to public education—by funding class size reduction and COLA initiatives, providing competitive compensation to keep the best teachers and ESPs, and continuing to invest in public schools.

"Students deserve it, voters expect it, and the Constitution requires it," WEA President Charles Hasse told more than 25,000 ralliers in Olympia.

"We have a powerful vision," added NEA President Reg Weaver, one of three NEA national officers to speak at the day's rallies. "It's a vision that goes to the very heart of the American

Adjusting Calendars to Adjust School Funding

As the funding crisis grows, you'll see more education stakeholders in more states coordinating calendar dates to lobby lawmakers on the continued need to invest in children and public education. Just two such projects in the works:

- On January 14, more than 100 Washington state school districts "adjusted" their calendars to permit teachers and education support professionals to attend mass school funding rallies (story above).
- On that same day, **Oklahoma Education Association** members joined with other members of the broad-based Oklahoma Education Coalition—including parents, school board members, and superintendents—for a "Save Our Schools Summit" with action workshops and a mobilization planning session.

Summit participants finalized plans to build local coalitions to "spread the word" about the state's $250 million education budget cuts, which by spring could generate at least 5,000 educator pink slips and cause at least 100 districts to run out of cash. The goal: win legislative support for a temporary penny sales tax boost to aid schools, meet a constitutional mandate to keep schools open, and head off a property tax hike.

The depth of Oklahoma's educational crisis—involving everything from class size increases to a severe shortage of classroom supplies—prompted many district coalition partners to adjust school calendars to turn out teachers, ESPs, and administrators for a huge February 12 rally on the state Capitol steps, followed by a day of mass lobbying.

- Kentucky NEA members also worked with district superintendents to adjust calendars on February 12, organizing a mass rally that would completely—and legally—block the state Capitol from traffic. After that event, educators were to deliver sacks of member postcards, calling for adequate education funding, to the governor and each legislator.

In this year's 30-day legislative session, the **Kentucky Education Association** was to lobby for a hike in the state's low tobacco tax to aid schools in the face of a $500 million state deficit, while engaging in an ongoing campaign to fund the mandates of the historic, far-reaching Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990—which requires adequately compensated, insured, and trained teachers and manageable class sizes to sustain dramatic gains in student achievement.

Dale Folkerts

More than 25,000 Washington state NEA members march in Olympia for ample education funding, the state's "paramount duty" under its constitution.

Dream: a vision of every child having a quality education."

WEA's next step: a continuing "citizen's campaign" for school funding that involves extensive media and community outreach and one-on-one sessions with legislators. ✔

—Dave Winans

For more on WEA's "citizen's campaign" to win state investment in quality public schools, go to www.wa.nea.org.

Four Ways To Push For Better School Funding

No one state can immediately extricate itself from a funding crisis, but here are some getting-started ideas from NEA and two state affiliates:

1. Make the tax system fair. In the short term, NEA recommends closing corporate tax loopholes, adding a temporary upper income tax bracket, and "decoupling" state laws from the federal estate tax and accelerated depreciation provisions—which reduces state revenues by billions. And the long-term solution: create state tax structures that capture enough revenue from economic growth to fund services at adequate levels.

2. Plan for the real costs of education. Step 1: Perform an "adequacy" study of the true cost of implementing state educational standards. Step 2: Think ahead. The California Education Coalition (CEC) calls for a "comprehensive, multi-year plan" to resolve the state's fiscal crisis and to address the immediate and future needs of students and schools, while the California Teachers Association—a CEC affiliate—pledges ongoing work to "achieve a funding base for public education that is adequate, ongoing, and dependable."

3. Build coalitions. Every state needs an alliance of education stakeholders such as the CEC or the Oklahoma Education Coalition (OEC). "Organize active pro-public education coalitions at the local level where possible, and with school boards wherever you can," Oklahoma Education Association President Carolyn Crowder advises local affiliate leaders. "School board meetings can be an excellent forum to educate the public about the effects of budget cuts. You may not agree with your school board at the bargaining table, but you can agree on the need for adequate funding."

4. Get the federal government to fully fund its education mandates. Requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) add huge financial burdens to states and districts—at the same time the Bush administration is proposing $670 billion in tax giveaways over 10 years.

The 'Gold Standard' of NEA Members

Recently, 77 teachers and education support professionals in southern Ohio's consolidated Eastern Local School/Pike County waged a grueling 107-day strike against health care takebacks and for basic respect. By the time they ratified new three-year contracts in January—improving health care provisions, guaranteeing new teacher and ESP rights, and providing annual raises of 3 percent for teachers and 60 cents, 45 cents, and 35 cents per hour for ESPs—members of the Eastern Local Classroom Teachers Association (ELCTA) and Eastern Local School Support Personnel Association (ELSSPA) wrote a new chapter in education labor history. Here's the short version of a very long—107-day—story:

Michael A. Foley/Rycus Associates Photography

Ohio teacher Amy L. Babst tutors students to help them keep up with their studies during a 107-day strike.

THE BACKGROUND . . . This rural Ohio district, which enjoys extensive state aid and large annual budget surpluses, could find cash last year to build a new $25 million consolidated school—with four principals—but bargained for across-the-board takebacks in employee health care. Superintendent Treva Harmon told mediators her take-it-or-leave it bargaining stance was based not on finances, but "philosophical differences," and promised to keep strikers out until Christmas. The district engaged high-priced security guards from the International Management Assistance Corporation, a provider of "total strike services," to guard the school and the superintendent on a 24-hour basis—despite a total absence of threats from strikers.

UNIFIED ACTION. . . Before the walkout, teachers and ESPs resolved to "marry" until they won new contracts. During the strike, they bargained and picketed together, shared strike duties, and supported one another through every crisis. ESPs even covered for striking teachers on the line while they tutored students at a makeshift "school" on Tuesdays and Thursdays—an activity upheld by the courts.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT. . . Local residents helped feed the strikers, held fundraisers, walked the picket line, sued in court to remove three anti-union school board members, and submitted an 800-signature petition to the parties that urged binding arbitration of the dispute. The union agreed to arbitration; the board simply ignored the petition.

UNION BACKING. . . ELCTA and ELSSPA members received strong support from the rest of the Ohio Education Association (OEA)—including loans, staff expertise, and picketing assistance from other OEA locals—as well as more than $50,000 in cash donations from NEA state affiliates from Oregon to New Jersey. Every area union from the Carpenters to the Steelworkers also offered their support.

JUST THE RIGHT ATTITUDE. . . Veteran bus driver Ralph Atkins, president of ELSSPA, counsels other NEA members facing the same struggle: "Make sure that you are prepared for hardships, that the community knows the issues, and that you always, always tell the truth. If you don't know, say you don't know. This served us well."

AN EYE ON THE FUTURE. . . OEA Labor Relations Consultant Don Dalton says Eastern Local members have "ratified, but aren't satisfied" completely with their new contract. The next step: mobilize *now* for November elections, when two of the five school board slots are up for grabs. If anybody can make an impact on those races, Dalton says, it's these educators. "They're the gold standard" of NEA members, he concludes.

—D.W.

IDEA Faces Reauthorization

And NEA members in California are working to ensure it's fully funded and effectively addresses the needs of students.

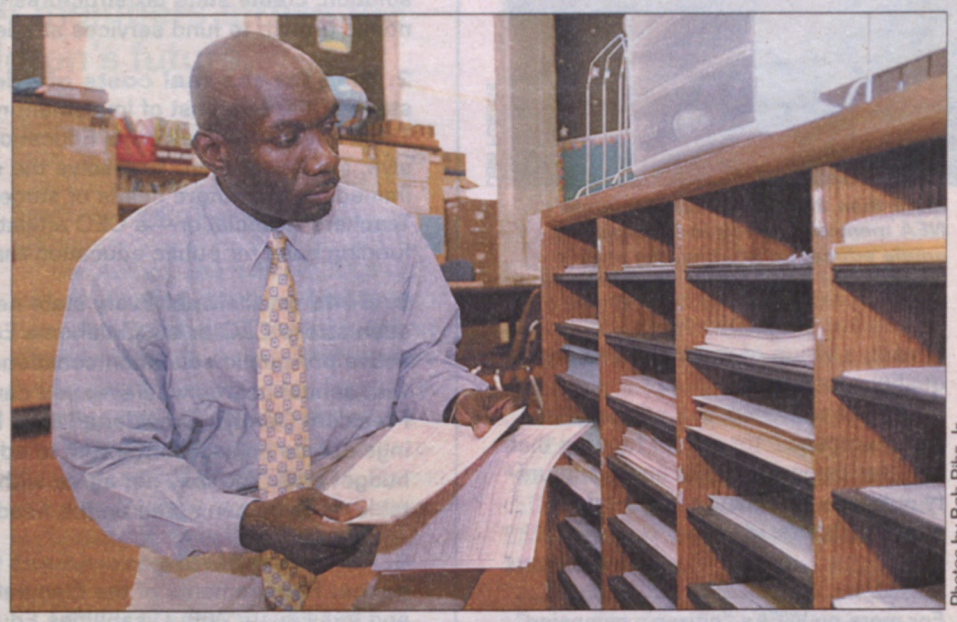
Ask California elementary special ed teacher Ken Johnson what he likes most about his job—"pull-out" work with youngsters who often have processing disabilities—and he answers in a blink. "I have the unique opportunity to see a child's steady progress over time, year-in, year-out—sometimes over five years," says the seven-year veteran.

"I remember a first grader who knew two letters and could not write her own name," Johnson says. "After four years, she was proficient in reading at grade level!"

Johnson, who teaches at Woodrow Wilson Elementary in Colton, embodies what's right and workable about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), first passed by Congress in 1975 to ensure a "free appropriate public education" matched to the needs of children with disabilities.

Despite incredible challenges—*many* mandatory procedures, a mountain of paperwork, daily contacts with outside agencies and organizations, and meager federal IDEA funding—Johnson still achieves results and believes strongly in the fundamental ideal of public education.

"Everyone, starting from the top down, should believe that *all* children can learn," says Johnson. "There's got to be a sense of community, a sense that they're *all* 'our' kids, that everyone belongs. Administrators and general and special ed teachers must collaborate, communicate, reassess, and re-



Photos by Bob Riha Jr.

Like other special ed teachers, Ken Johnson deals with endless paperwork and procedures—one reason NEA is pushing for a more useful and humane IDEA.

evaluate, and—above all—look at the needs of each child and ensure a continuum of options."

That's just one message the Bush administration and members of Congress will be hearing from Johnson and other NEA members this spring during the process to "reauthorize" IDEA, last amended in 1997.

Consensus has already emerged among NEA members on what it'll take to effectively educate students with disabilities while protecting their basic rights.

Topping this list: full federal funding of IDEA (promised at 40 percent, now at just 18 percent), manageable workload/paperwork standards, adequate professional development, "early intervention" to spot child needs, consistency in IDEA eligibility, and effective disciplinary procedures—linked to alternative learning settings for offenders.

"Everyone, starting from the top down, should believe that *all* children can learn. There's got to be a sense of community, a sense that they're *all* 'our' kids."

—Elementary special ed teacher Ken Johnson

It's a lobbying challenge complicated by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which has created a funding-for-outcomes system based on narrow, standardized testing.

It is no secret that the Bush administration wants IDEA to look more like ESEA. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education specifically recommends that "state and local accountability systems...must be consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act [ESEA]."

This will become extremely difficult when school districts grapple with how to blend the group-based testing model of ESEA with the individualized instruction model of IDEA.

But if any group of educators can push to make IDEA useful and humane, it's the 330,000 members of the California Teachers Association (CTA), who collectively educate 670,000 students with individualized education plans (IEPs). CTA, NEA's largest state affiliate, is now engaged in a high-energy campaign to ensure that federal policy makers write a special ed law that reflects classroom realities and needs.

Steering the drive is CTA's top policy-making body, the State Council, and its broad-based CTA IDEA Task Force—combining elected leaders, general and special ed teachers, and Association staffers in every specialty from special education to litigation.

At press time, the task force was surveying special and general educators in every CTA local affiliate to refine the Association's list of IDEA reauthorization priorities, while participating in a 30-organization statewide coalition of special ed "stakeholders" to develop some common bargaining objectives.

"CTA wants to be proactive, not reactive in the IDEA reauthorization process," says task force member Judy Jacobs, chair of CTA's Special and Alternative Education Committee. "Our members need to have their voices heard *before* people make decisions in Washington." ✔

—Dave Winans

An IDEA Lobbying Guide

Congress is to start hearings and debate on IDEA reauthorization in early spring, but the time for NEA members to be heard is *now*.

"Send e-mails and letters to your members of Congress," NEA lobbyist Kim Anderson urges special and general educators. "And organize visits by NEA member to see your representatives in Congress. You can visit at their district offices. Invite them to your school. We need more grassroots activities 'back home,' where NEA members have the most influence."

When you make contact with your lawmakers, urge them to:

- Keep voucher provisions out of the reauthorized law;
- Fully fund IDEA;
- Improve the working conditions of educators (starting with reduced paperwork);
- Emphasize—and fund—professional development in the new law.

"Talk to other teachers and education support professionals about IDEA reauthorization," Anderson adds. "We need a grassroots investment in this campaign, involving a little bit of everybody's time and a lot of passion about making changes for kids."

To make your voice heard in the process to improve the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, complete an NEA questionnaire at www.nea.org/lac/idea/gr-idea.html.

And to receive an e-mail alert on NEA's progress in IDEA reauthorization, send a message to NEA staffer Patti Ralabate at pralabate@nea.org.

[KUDOS TO...]

. . . the Illinois Education Association-IEA, for winning lost wages and benefits—and a full school board apology—for former Smithton Education Association President Judy Hand, who was suspended for 30 days on bogus charges of violating the district's grade book policy. Some board members added to the damage by telling local residents that "other data" in Hand's personnel file justified the suspension—a charge that "was wrong," the apology noted. Hand believes she was targeted because of her Association advocacy.

. . . the Colorado Education Association, for winning representation elections for education support professionals in Canon City, Pueblo, and Montrose.

. . . the Keansburg (New Jersey) Teachers Association (KTA), honored by the New Jersey Education Association for bargaining and organizing gains. KTA has reduced the number of steps in its salary guide, increased starting teacher pay to $40,000 (in September 2004), and welcomed 63 teacher aides into its ranks—with full contractual benefits.

. . . the Capistrano (California) Unified Education Association, which, after more than a year without an agreement, has won a new three-year contract. The pact, which improves health benefits, will increase the salary schedule by 5.5 percent during the first two years, and by an amount equalling the state's cost-of-living adjustment in the third year. "Without the strong support of CUEA members, and the pressure put on the district by parents and the community, we would not have an agreement," says CUEA President Frank Weirath.

. . . education unions in France, which struck for a day in January to protest the national government's education "reform" program, which so far in 2003 has meant the dismissal of 5,600 "surveillants"—employees who maintain order in schools—and 20,000 teacher aides. The government has also scaled back recruitment of teachers in the "second degré" (upper primary and pre-university schools), despite a dire staff shortage.

Californians Offer Five Big Ideas on IDEA

With full funding, safeguards for student and parent rights, and streamlined procedures, a new Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) can live up to its promise, say three special ed teachers on the California Teachers Association's IDEA Task Force. When asked about their *own* IDEA priorities, these educators stress the need to:

1. Focus on children, not procedures. Task force chair Diana Garchow, a resource specialist at Highland Elementary in Bakersfield and a member of the NEA Board of Directors notes that California school systems pile on the procedures (all timed and scripted) to prevent special ed teachers from making any one of 812 "procedural errors" that can land a district in legal hot water. "The paperwork must be cut," she says, "to stop the exodus of special education teachers from the profession."

"We absolutely need to protect students' rights—we don't want to see them diminished," emphasizes Judy Jacobs, a resource specialist and president of the Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association. "But the paperwork is overwhelming. In response to court cases, districts keep coming up with more new forms to protect themselves."

2. Preserve Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). "The IEP is the cornerstone of special education and it should still drive decision making for every child," says Jacobs. "This is all about ensuring that we as a society continue to meet our ethical obligations to children and families."

"I teach 'Johnny Jones,' not subjects," adds Garchow. "My job is to ensure the growth of each child. We can't lose IDEA's focus on 'free appropriate' education for each student."

3. Pay the full price of special education. It isn't cheap to fund an IEP's modifications, accommodations, goals and objectives, and staffing requirements. California districts pay $16,000-$17,000 annually for each student identified under IDEA, money that should, but often doesn't, come from federal coffers.

Congress shouldn't "add new programs tied to 'accountability' without added funding," stresses Jacobs. "We need to protect special ed programs already in place—not replace and reconfigure without dollars."

4. Prevent special education students from dropping out. If IDEA winds up looking just like ESEA, special ed students could be tested annually at grade level without the help of readers, braille, or assistive technology—a sure road to "failure" and a disincentive to stay in school. "If we *must* test at grade level, we need accommodations for testing parallel to those we now make for instruction," says Garchow.

Like his task force colleagues, Ken Johnson, a resource specialist in Colton, is nervous about the idea of assessing special ed students (currently evaluated by *progress* as well as paper-and-pencil tests) just like their general ed peers. "The curriculum shouldn't be watered down for special ed students—they're kids who learn differently," he notes. "But we need to keep looking at kids' progress in meeting goals and objectives in their IEPs. Standardized tests should not be the be-all and end-all."

5. Build bridges between general and special education. Regardless of the IDEA-related issue—student discipline, early intervention, or special ed dropout statistics that could quickly change a good school into a "low-performing" school—general education teachers have a direct stake in the reauthorization process.

"If IDEA is reauthorized incorrectly, it will change the face of special education," shudders Garchow.

"If an eligible child is not considered for special education or special ed disappears altogether," Garchow explains, "kids with special needs will still be in the classroom with a general education teacher, who will still be obligated to make 'adequate yearly progress' under ESEA—with no assistance from a special ed teacher or paraeducator. Special education teachers are already leaving our schools because of the paperwork and workload."

For more: CTA IDEA Task Force Chair Diana Garchow can be reached at dgarchow@aol.com.

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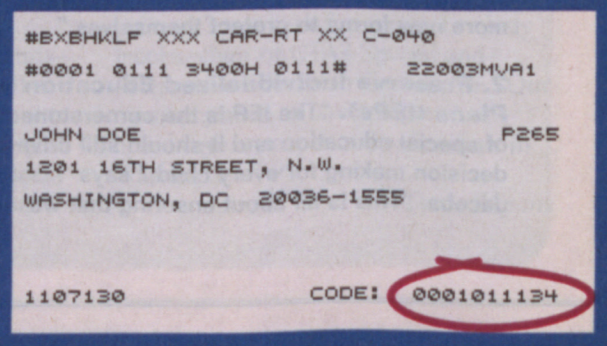
Here's how to register!

Go to www.owl.org. Click on the register button on the right hand side of the screen. Complete the registration form. You'll be asked for your 10-digit NEA membership number. It can be found on the mailing label of this copy of *NEA Today* (see illustration).



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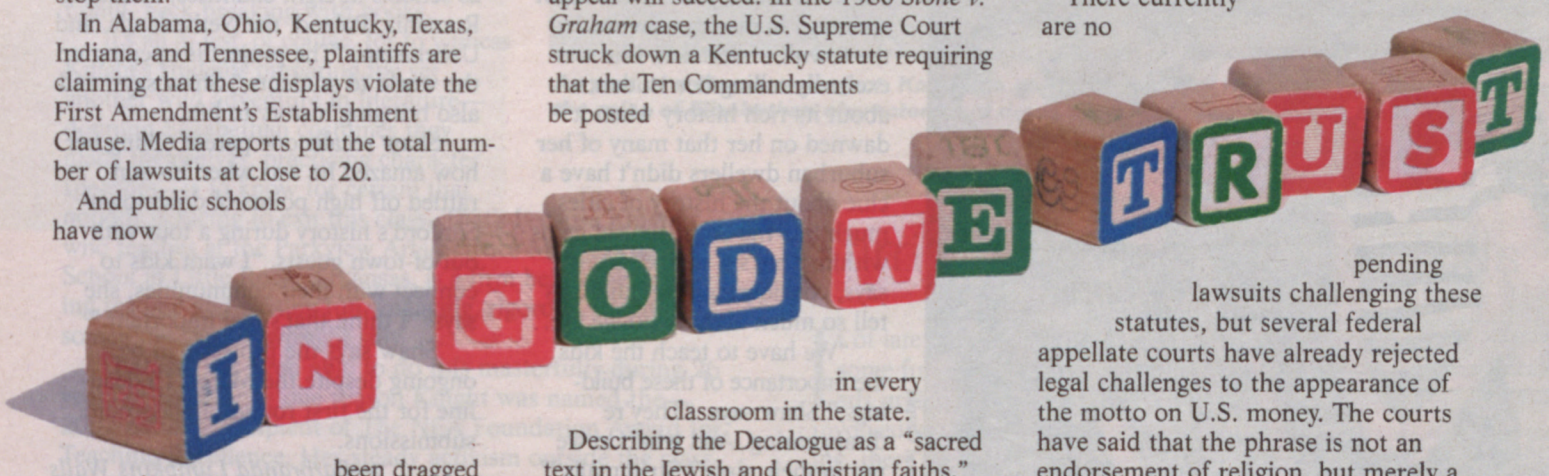
'Thou Shalt Not...'

'...post the Ten Commandments in school,' say federal courts, but 'In God We Trust' is probably OK.

Moses is making a comeback, although it may be short-lived. Lately, a growing number of government officials have tried to require that the Ten Commandments be posted in public places, mainly courthouses and parks. There have also been an equal number of lawsuits to stop them.

In Alabama, Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, Indiana, and Tennessee, plaintiffs are claiming that these displays violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. Media reports put the total number of lawsuits at close to 20.

And public schools have now



Daniel Peck, PeckStudios

been dragged into the fray. The Virginia and Alabama state legislatures last year considered—but failed to enact—bills to mandate posting the Ten Commandments in classrooms.

But in Ohio, the Adams County Board of Education erected granite monuments inscribed with the Ten Commandments in front of four new high schools. In a suit filed by the Ohio ACLU, a federal judge ruled last June that these monuments breach the wall of church/state separation—and ordered school officials to haul off the 800-pound granite slabs immediately.

In November, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals denied the school board's emergency request that it be allowed to leave the monuments in place, pending an appeal.

It's highly unlikely that the board's appeal will succeed. In the 1980 *Stone v. Graham* case, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Kentucky statute requiring that the Ten Commandments be posted in every classroom in the state.

Describing the Decalogue as a "sacred text in the Jewish and Christian faiths," the court emphasized that many Commandments are not confined to "secular matters," but rather prescribe the "religious duties of believers." Thus, the purpose and effect of posting the Ten Commandments, the court said, is to "induce the school children. . . to venerate and obey" those religious tenets.

The next legal battlefield may involve the posting of "In God We Trust" in schools. The phrase first appeared on U.S. currency during the Civil War, and it was declared the "national motto" by an act of Congress in 1956.

Four states—Virginia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Utah—recently enacted laws requiring that the motto be posted in classrooms or schools. Five other states—Louisiana, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Kentucky—expressly permit the practice.

There currently are no pending lawsuits challenging these statutes, but several federal appellate courts have already rejected legal challenges to the appearance of the motto on U.S. money. The courts have said that the phrase is not an endorsement of religion, but merely a form of "ceremonial deism" that "fosters patriotism" and "confidence in the future."

Only time will tell whether this rationale will apply to preK-12 schools, where the courts generally are more protective of "impressionable" children. ✔

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Supreme Court Preview

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear three controversial cases of special interest to NEA members:

■ For the first time in 25 years, the high court will decide whether colleges and universities can use affirmative action in student admissions.

In the 1978 *Bakke* case, a divided court ruled that schools can use race as a "plus" factor in making admissions decisions. In recent years, however, federal appellate courts have thrown out affirmative action plans from state universities in Georgia and Texas.

Last December, the Court agreed to hear appeals in two cases challenging the University of Michigan's affirmative action plans for its law school and undergraduate program. Last May, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the university that the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body justify affirmative action.

Since many institutions of higher education use some form of affirmative action, an adverse decision could have dramatic and long-lasting consequences.

NEA, which filed an amicus brief in the *Bakke* case, will also file an amicus brief in the Michigan cases supporting the university's affirmative action effort.

■ The Supreme Court also will decide whether Congress can require public libraries that receive E-rate discounts to install filtering software that blocks access to sexually explicit websites. The requirement is contained in the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA).

Last May, in a lawsuit brought by the American Library Association, a federal court ruled that the requirement violates the First Amendment. The court said that filtering software is both over-inclusive—it blocks websites that have nothing to do with pornography—and under-inclusive, because it doesn't block all sexually explicit sites.

The CIPA requirement for filtering software also applies to schools that receive E-rate discounts. This lawsuit, however, does not challenge that mandate, which became effective on July 1, 2002.

■ Finally, the high court will decide whether state employees, including employees of colleges and universities, can sue their employers for violating the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—the federal law that requires most employers to grant up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for employees to care for ailing relatives, tend to a newborn child, or receive personal medical attention.

In recent years, the Supreme Court has ruled that state workers can't sue for age or disability discrimination under federal law, holding that these statutes violate "state sovereignty." Many court watchers are predicting the same disturbing result in the FMLA case.

NEA has filed an amicus brief supporting the state workers.

The Supreme Court is expected to rule in these three cases sometime prior to its adjournment in June.

—M.D.S.

If Walls Could Talk

If there's really a story behind every building—the abandoned storefront up the street, the old church around the corner, that brand-new house—one NEA member is making sure students unearth them.

Joanne Carole

Rosemary Shaw (third from right) stands with her students outside a historic school building that is now a local library.

Through "Listening to the Walls Talk," an online educational project, Rosemary Shaw is teaching children how to record the history of houses and neighborhoods around the world and giving them some geographic and research skills along the way.

A Web design and research teacher at Millennium Middle School in Sanford, Florida, Shaw created the site because of her own passion for historic preservation.

"I've always been very interested in historic homes," says Shaw, who two years ago bought a vintage home once owned by the town's undertaker. She was excitedly telling her students about its rich history when it dawned on her that many of her suburban dwellers didn't have a clue about the history of cities, much less the architectural gems within. That's a shame, Shaw says, considering that buildings tell so much about who we are.

"We have to teach the kids the importance of these buildings," Shaw says. "They're disappearing. And what do we put in their place? Strip malls?"

Determined to make a difference, Shaw designed "Listening to the Walls Talk" as a class project for students and their teachers. Teachers guide students through meticulously detailed lessons in geography, research techniques, and historic preservation. Then they create a webpage to post on the "Listening" site, telling their neighborhood's story through writings, photographs, maps, and diagrams. Students are encouraged, too, to work with their parents to research their own homes. Each class then submits the best of these individual home stories to the site for use by other students, museums, and historic societies.

So far, more than 20 U.S. schools are participating in the project, as well as schools in eight countries, including Romania, Poland, the Netherlands, and Uzbekistan. "The project is opening up the world to students," Shaw says, and also bringing history to life.

Shaw recalls one parent telling her how amazed he was when his son rattled off high points of downtown Sanford's history during a tour with out-of-town guests. "I want kids to connect with their communities, she says. "I think that's real important."

Shaw says the project will be ongoing despite the March 15 deadline for the first round of classroom submissions.

—Barbranda Lumpkins Walls

For More: Contact Rosemary Shaw at Rosemary_Shaw@scps.k12.fl.us or visit www.millennium.scps.k12.fl.us/walls.html.

You're 80? Whoa!

How do you get kids in baggy pants to appreciate the good old days? Simple: Get them involved, hands-on, with the elders in their community. NEA members Renee Oscarson, Ph.D., and Julie Bell of South Dakota State University at Brookings, found a way to do just that with an intergenerational learning project that's turned out to be a roaring success. "It's such a great opportunity for both groups to give back to each other," says Oscarson.

Collaborating with the state's 93 chapters of Family, Community and Career Leaders of America (FCCLA), Oscarson, an associate professor of human development, consumer and family sciences, along with assistant professor Bell, are tapping the ingenuity of FCCLA student members from the state's high schools and from their own university. The result has been some lively "face" time between the youth and hundreds of lucky seniors.

The students started the project last summer by evaluating specific senior needs within their communities and planning activities. By the fall, they'd fanned across communities, visiting nursing homes and assisted living facilities, participating in literacy programs, giving manicures and pedicures, and making table favors and door signs. Some students got so creative they even gave a group of elders a senior citizens prom.

Dave Eggen

South Dakota State University student Susan Syverson chats with Frieda Holter during a visit.

Bell says students get a lot more than just a warm feeling of altruism from their involvement. They develop social skills, explore careers in aging and, most importantly, develop worthwhile connections with another generation. Seniors make up more than 14 percent of South Dakota's population, so programs like these, Bell says, are vital to helping them maintain a healthy quality of life. "These experiences need to occur," she notes. "It strengthens both groups by allowing the seniors to increase their resiliency, and the students to boost their self worth" by giving back.

Oscarson, whose project was funded in part by an Innovation Grant from The NEA Foundation, says even she got a boost she didn't expect. "Seeing those older adults transformed my own ideas about what successful aging is," she says. "It's a new perspective."

—Leah Lakins

For More: E-mail Renee Oscarson at renee_oscarson@sdstate.edu or julie_bell@sdstate.edu. For information on NEA Foundation Innovation Grants, visit www.nfie.org.

'Knightly' Pursuits

Photos courtesy of Katherine Wright Knight

As part of a literature project, Katherine Wright Knight (far right) and her students take on the roles of Elizabethan characters and dress up in costumes they help make.

Katherine Wright Knight will tell you right off that her 9th- and 10th-grade English classes are not for the faint of heart. "My kids accuse me of being strict," she says, chuckling. "[They'll say] 'Mrs. Knight, we're just high school. We're not ready for *that*!'" So tough, in fact, is her reputation, that on a mural of a castle painted outside her classroom door, there's Knight—on a horse. And taped to the wall, courtesy of her charges, is a cartoon-like picture of a student slugging uphill, back breaking with books.

It's all in jest, of course, for to witness Knight's students preparing for yet another wild adventure in literature—donning Elizabethan costumes they made themselves, practicing character speeches—is to know for certain that nobody is racing to exit this class. That's because Knight, who teaches at the Parkview Arts/Science Magnet High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, is a firm believer in making reading and writing fun, engaging, rigorous, timely, and sometimes, just downright silly.

That she has been able to do this masterfully during 26 years of teaching is one reason Knight was named the 2002 national recipient of The NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. Her steady activism outside the classroom—as a leader in the Arkansas Education Association, a mentor for college students, a professional development trainer, a volunteer in numerous organizations—is another.

Katherine Wright Knight humored her students by dressing up as Cleopatra.

"What I know is that students are not the same as they were 20 years ago, so I can't use the same old methods," says Knight, who last year was also named Arkansas Teacher of the Year. "I believe in change, and in making the classroom as relaxed and humorous and relevant as possible, even as I make high academic demands."

Enter here cartoons, movies, hip hop music, and all manner of hands-on ideas Knight has dreamed up over the years—her famous medieval project, where students compete to find the most creative ways to bring alive topics like the Black Plague; her poetry readings and face-offs renowned now for the fireworks they spark; the book presentations by diverse groups of students, who decide on their own how they will "perform" their novels before the class. And there is the recent favorite—the Elizabethan Era project, where students spend weeks making their own costumes, researching history, and deciding how to write the monologue they will recite to "present" their characters.

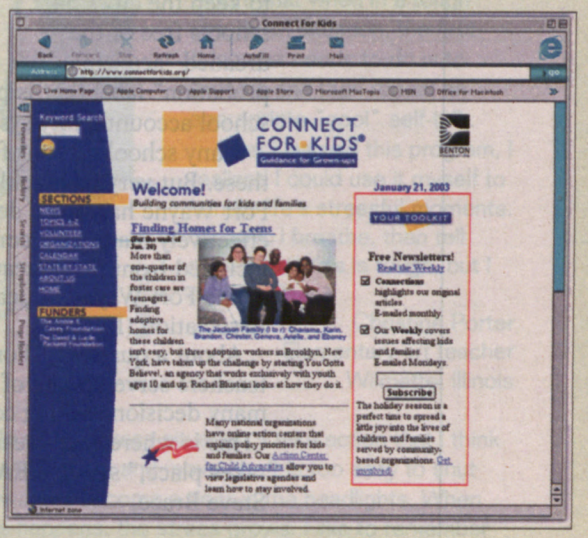
"It's about letting them have fun even as they do all the work that's involved, and it's a lot," says Knight. "But I think this is what really motivates kids. With this project, they *really* get into it."

And, yes, so does she. This year Knight made her grand entrance as Cleopatra. "Truly," she says, laughing, "a sight to behold."

—Marilyn Milloy

For More: E-mail Katherine Wright Knight at katherine.knight@lrsd.org. To find out about the annual award process or to apply for NEA Foundation grants, visit www.nfie.org.

Stirring Up Activism for Kids



If of late you've been hearing some fun, quirky radio or TV ads urging parents to get involved in their children's schooling, there's a pretty good chance it's the collaborative doings of NEA, the Ad Council and...Connect for Kids.

Connect for Kids? Not exactly a household name—yet. But stay tuned. Since it was spawned six years ago, this advocacy organization has been reaching into more and more homes—and stirring up some old-fashioned activism along the way. The radio and TV campaign with NEA, a longtime partner, is just the group's latest effort to ensure as many people as possible hear and ponder its central message: People can do something to make their communities better for children. And should.

By all accounts it's an idea that's been catching notice. The parent involvement ads, currently airing in some 30 markets, help promote one of NEA's big issues. But the group's showcase offering, wwwconnectforkids.org, promotes many more.

"We actually began as an experiment to see what role the Internet could play in traditional public service campaigns," says Cecelia Garcia, Connect for Kids' executive director. "How could this new technology be used to inspire people to act?"

Scores of partnerships and thousands of "hits" later, the website is successfully showing the way. With some 2,000 links, it is a virtual storehouse of family-related information on everything from foster care and children's health to education, crime prevention, and parenting. Original news articles bring home issues that are global, and ideas for activism loom large. Garcia says everyday people regularly share how they've been inspired to do something after visiting the website, such as the woman who organized the Million Mom's March in her state and the South African woman who organized a community discussion around race.

This year the website features a monthly calendar, *Celebrating Families*, that highlights the diversity found across religious groups, cultures, races, and families themselves. Each month features a "toolkit" with tips for making communities better. Garcia says it's just one more way to inspire.

"We don't ask people for money," she says. "We just want them to spread the word: Help make life great for our kids."

—M.M.

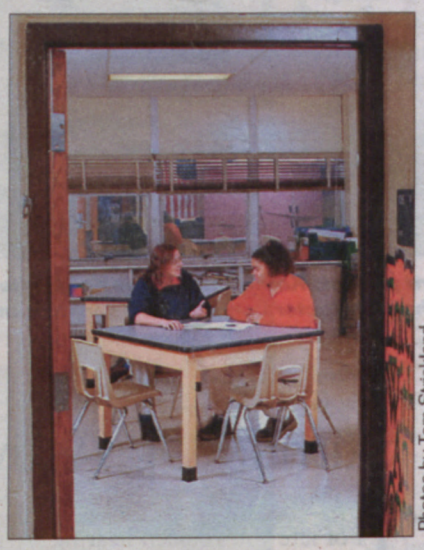
For More:
Visit www.connectforkids.org

Beyond the Paycheck

Indiana educators play major decision-making role—and 85 percent of new teachers stay.

The Fort Wayne, Indiana, school district had some major planning on its agenda last year:

- Design professional development for the system's 1,800 teachers;
- Choose one schedule for all six high schools;
- Work out strategies to keep the city's 54 schools free of the dreaded "academic probation" label that is part of Indiana's school accountability system.



Photos by Tom Strickland

Many school systems face issues like these. But very few tackle them the way Fort Wayne has. Each decision was effectively made by a committee that included frontline educators, members of the Fort Wayne Education Association (FWEA).

About a quarter of Fort Wayne's teachers serve on one of the system's many decision-making committees. "This is where real, meaningful change takes place," says FWEA President Steve Brace.

Administrators in this mid-sized, working class city also sit on these committees, and in some cases, so do parents and the occasional student. But teachers usually play the leading role.

Based on a survey of educators, the in-service committee chose programs that best met staff needs.

The high school schedule committee narrowed the schedule choices to two, and then all high school teachers voted. Now, with all schools on the same schedule, there's less confusion when students transfer.

The state accountability committees, one in each building, came up with test score targets and strategies for meeting them.

"We all brought different things to the table, including the student member who had many useful ideas," says Kathy Malott, a Portage Middle School teacher who worked on the project in her school.

As a result of all this committee work, teachers laud the improved decision-making process and there's a great deal more buy-in from the educators who must carry them out. "When you have ownership, you take more pride and responsibility in what you're doing," says Brace.

The committees also serve to connect the staff. "I teach art and art history," says Malott, "but now I'm more attuned to what other teachers are doing so I can gear my work to fit. If we didn't have this collaboration, teachers would go back to being more isolated."

Teacher Kathy Malott and student Ashley Moore worked together to develop the student achievement plan for their middle school.

Now in Fort Wayne, new teachers don't leave. Eighty-five percent of the teachers hired in the last five years still work in the district. Brace gives a lot of credit for the high retention rate to the district's mentoring program, also run by a joint committee.

School districts across America vary wildly in the ways they make decisions. In some, the superintendent rules supreme, while those who actually work with the children have little say.

Fort Wayne is at the other end of the

Roy Tanaka/Photoplant

How I Did It

Noelani Hong
Guidance counselor
Hawaii

Helping Students Find Real Heroes

When I came to Pahala Elementary School and Ka`u High School, I knew I was headed into a tough situation.

In a community with high unemployment and where teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and fights were frequent occurrences, I asked myself, "How am I going to be able to help?"

I found my answer in "Hero Hookup."

The Hero Hookup program started in September 2001 to help students find positive role models both inside and outside their community.

Many of my students had trouble recognizing real heroes. When I asked who their heroes were, only a handful selected family members, firefighters, or their teachers, while the majority picked Powderpuff Girls or Superman.

I saw a need for students to be exposed to more realistic heroes.

I decided to go out into the community and find prominent figures whom the children might be able to relate to. By asking people such as University of Hawaii Professor Manulani Aluli-Meyer, police officer Bill Doar, Mayor Harry Kim, physician Josh Green, and Congressman Ed Case to participate, I was able to find heroes the children could interact with on a more personal level.

These speakers talked with students about what they do and the paths they took to get where they are now, including how they dealt with setbacks and defeats.

Since the Hero Hookup program began, the school climate has improved tremendously. Swearing and fights are rare now.

Most important, students are respecting themselves.

Hero Hookup doesn't deserve all the credit. We have made many big changes in our school. But Hero Hookup played an important role.

spectrum. Cooperation between union and management has given teachers a seat—in fact, many seats—at the decision-making table. The FWEA contract specifically provides for these joint committees.

The teachers on the committees are volunteers, sometimes nominated by their principal, but they must be approved by the union president. Eighty percent of Fort Wayne teachers are FWEA members.

Relations between the Fort Wayne school administration and the union aren't always sweet. This spring, negotiations are starting for a new contract, and Brace expects tough bargaining over salaries and other economic issues.

But where educators and administrators share the same goal—namely, giving Fort Wayne's 32,000 public school children the best possible education—the union and administration cooperate smoothly and effectively, and Brace doesn't expect that to change.

Last year, the administration and the union won an NEA-Saturn/UAW Labor/Management Partnership to Mentor New Teachers award for their mentoring program, one of six awards given nationwide for mentoring programs developed together by unions and school administrators. ✔

—Alain Jehlen

For more: Contact Steve Brace, stevefwea@aol.com, or Kathy Malott, Kathy.Malott@fwcs.k12.in.us. To apply for an NEA-Saturn/UAW Award for exemplary mentoring programs, go to www15.inetba.com/saturnuaw/filecabinet/Satfile/PAapplication.htm. The application deadline is March 14.

[DILEMMA]

How do you cool off in a high-stress situation?

When a kid has just stepped on my last nerve, I say, "I want to talk to you after class." That way, I am not putting on a show for the other students, I am giving myself time to think about what to say. I'm giving the student a little time to worry about what he or she has done, and I'm getting a little time to cool off.

Afterward, I ask, "Why did I ask you to stay after class?" Ninety percent of the time, the student will say, "Because I did thus and so." Then, I'm not looking at an argument about whether or not the act took place. The student is admitting it.

I tell the student I know he or she is not the kind who wants to create problems. Again, 9 times out of 10, this is absolutely true.

Marcia Hoffman
Special services teacher
North Kansas City, Missouri

■ When I feel myself getting heated, I turn to humor. There is a fine line between humor and sarcasm, so you must be careful. First, drop your hands to your side, shake them out, look at the student and say, "You know, that is probably what I would have said when I was your age." This catches the student totally off guard. Sometimes a student says, "Gee, you can remember that far back!" The ice (or fire) has been broken.

When all else fails, you can always try Prozac!

Kay Meredith
High school English teacher,
Powhatan, Virginia

■ Strong feelings only occur when the individual cares a lot about the outcome. I try to remember that stress is an indicator of how much I care. If the situation doesn't warrant it, I remind myself of that and let go of whatever trivial thing is driving the reaction.

If the situation really is important, I remember that the other person's anger comes from his or her love for the child. I then remember what I like about the child and try to conjure up an interaction I had with the child that was positive. That puts me back into a place where we are all working for what's best for the child. This works with parents, administrators, and fellow classroom teachers and ESPs.

Bekah Saxon
Middle school resource teacher
Charlottesville, Virginia

Ted Pitts

■ I find the best stress reliever is exercise. A colleague and I walk after school every day. Often we talk about the things that are stressing us, and by the end, we feel much better.

When I find myself in high-stress situations during the day, I use several techniques to calm myself. Taking a couple of deep breaths gives me a chance to clear my head and plan my next step. When possible, I take notes, which helps me organize my thoughts and deal in facts instead of emotions. Humor is a big help. As I work through a stressful event, I think of how I will relate this story to colleagues, usually ending in a humorous comment like "For this I went to college!"

Janet Shlegle,
Elementary special education teacher
Loveville, Maryland

■ Our district has a program called "Rough Spot Training." All the students have been taught that when in a tough emotional situation, the first thing one needs to do is to breathe and then repeat an appropriate "cool" self-talk.

After I learned this program, I realized I could use it myself to handle life's stressful moments. So now, I breathe, then tell myself that this is tough, but I can handle it.

Christine Porter
Elementary art teacher
Wilmette, Illinois

■ In a high-stress situation, I take action that I think is appropriate and move on. It is too easy to shut down and become a deer in the headlights. When this happens, the stress grows. I like to remember that I am a teacher like millions of others who are all doing the best they can. We all make mistakes. If I screw it all up, so what? I did my best.

Chris Perillo
High school science teacher
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Got an answer?

How do you keep your students focused at the end of the year?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

Real Teachers. . . know that students don't care what you know until they know that you care.

— Donna Zuccala, elementary physical education teacher, Cincinnati, Ohio

Should all high schools have fewer than 1,000 students?

yes

The newly renovated building is nice and clean with fresh paint and new tile floors. The sea of mobile classrooms is still there, which we affectionately call "Mustang Meadows" after our mascot. Nearly 2,000 students crowd our halls.

Why not build a second high school to accommodate our exploding population, rather than spending so much on a renovation? Why keep all these students together? These are the questions voiced by many in Mustang Meadows. The need for relief is there. The frustration of too many students grows.

Having taught in a school with an even larger student body of 3,000, this is nothing new to me. It is a nightmare to learn the faces and names of so many. It can only be a similar dilemma for an administrator to attempt to maintain discipline and pray that there is never a serious situation that could lead to "code red." Who would know an intruder?

High school students are very social individuals. They need of a lot of personal attention by adults as they prepare to leave the secondary portion of their education journey. But in a big school, it is virtually impossible for teachers, much less the administrators, to know the students, and as for the students getting to know each other—really forming those close ties that are so important—forget it. What ever happened to the concept of a tight-knit school community?

Certainly, there are those who say none of this is important in the educating of America's young. The whole idea of building relationships that could last a lifetime and learning a sense of community, well who needs that? The notion that so many kids slip through the cracks and are never identified for special needs in big schools, well let's just ignore that too.

But the number one complaint from teachers is the lack of discipline in public schools. Having smaller schools is a huge step in the right direction for solving this ever-present problem. Giving kids a sense of community would allow for better discipline and a much improved learning environment.

Yes, the pool for superior athletes might be smaller, but surely a superior learning environment is more important! ✔

SID CHAPMAN teaches economics at Morrow High School in Clayton County, Georgia, a rapidly growing Atlanta suburb. He has taught for 16 years, seven of them at Morrow. He is president of the Clayton County Education Association.

no

I believe it would be a mistake to severely limit the size of high schools. While I am not comfortable with "mega schools" of 2,000 to 3,000 or even more, I do think a student body of 1,500 to 1,700 offers significant advantages of scale.

I am familiar with a small school in a more rural part of our district, with a music program that it is rightfully proud of. This program would do justice to a school twice its size, but foreign language study struggles.

A school needs a "critical mass" of students to allow the diversity of programs necessary to offer a well-rounded program to every child. Even at 1,500 students, a school is likely to be forced to offer upper level courses in alternate years. The constraints of "building the master schedule" may force a student to decide if she wants to take AP biology or calculus in that third period slot. Is it to be psychology II or history of literature for the morning class? Students must choose because many classes are offered as "singles."

With the emphasis on high-stakes testing, the smaller school will also be severely taxed to offer an arts curriculum. Shall we cut ceramics II or string ensemble from the course offerings? Introduction to art or beginners band may both survive in the small school but will the sequential courses be available?

The administration in my own county, attempting to stretch human resources, may schedule a teacher in two or even three schools. While substituting for a music teacher I taught second graders violin, worked with the young clarinets and flutes, and then jumped in my car to rush to the middle school for eighth-grade general band. This is not only stressful for the teacher but also wasteful, since one period is devoted to travel and not teaching.

The traditional argument that the staff "gets to know all the kids" or that "no one falls between the cracks" won't wash for me. The youngster trying to blend into the wall will be just as hard to "see" among 800 as 1,800, and he actually has a better chance of finding a fellow "round peg in a square hole" in the larger school. ✔

JIM POLITIS began teaching in a 200-student high school in 1966, and went on to schools with 1,500 and 1,700, all in Montgomery County, Maryland. He left full-time teaching in 1998. He now substitutes regularly throughout the county.

What's Your Opinion?

Should all high schools have fewer than 1,000 students?
To vote, visit our website at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Is "abstinence-only" the best sex education policy for schools to implement?
The tally on the question in the last *NEA Today*:
47% Yes **53% No**

Should high school start at 9 a.m.?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

A Lesson In Building Bridges

Karen Brown began a family reading club to teach parents reading strategies and wound up learning a thing or two herself.

Photos by Scott Suchman

At a gathering of her family reading club, Karen Brown (above middle) works with Thelma Aguilar and her three children, and (at right) with Dawn Perry and her son, Darrius.

Two years ago, NEA member Karen Brown set out to help close the achievement gap for Black and Hispanic students at Cannon Road Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her idea? "Since parents are considered a child's first teacher," she explains, "why not create a multicultural family reading club that offers lessons in reading strategies along with books that would engage students *and* parents?"

The school agreed, and Brown managed to get a small grant to establish the Multicultural Family Book Club. She then identified 20 families to participate in this weekly, evening book club, bought the books, and gathered the families to read.

The parents organized into small groups, discussing books Brown had chosen and how they could be shared with their children. She also encouraged the families to work with each other.

Two years later, the parents say they've learned a lot about reading, and Brown says she's learned some hard-earned, but valuable lessons about running a family literacy project—lessons she shared at last year's International Reading Association conference.

"I made quite a few mistakes, but I was never afraid to acknowledge them or learn from them," says Brown.

For example, she says, "it's a mistake not to tell parents directly that their child was selected because he or she is a struggling reader." Being honest and forthright, she found, is the best policy. Also, "It's a mistake not to recognize a parent's own literacy issues and adjust accordingly. It's a mistake to be inflexible on issues like having more of the family participate." Recognizing the pitfalls, she says, made her shift gears. "We learned and improved."

For many of the parents, particularly immigrants, school has now become a less intimidating place, says Brown. "I had parents, including one father, who were really involved in some of the readings. They were also able to share their cultures. Now, since this project, we see more of these parents at the school during the day and after school. They're more comfortable on our school campus and more engaged in their child's school life."

And the children? "Since the program began, all of the students in the program moved up to grade level in reading, and a few did even better," says Brown. One 10-year-old, Darrius Perry, did so well, he's now a reading mentor, passing on his knowledge to younger students.

"I'd always been a reader," says Darrius' mother, Dawn Perry, "but the project gave me new skills to work with him. It's been great."

Brown says the "real" benefit of the project is that it extends far beyond the student or even the family. "Everyone ends up learning something new," she says, "even the teacher." ✔

—Anita Merina

For more: Contact Karen Brown at Karen_K_Brown@mcps.k12.md.us.

You Can Do It, Too!

If you're interested in creating a family reading program, take Karen Brown's hard-earned lessons to heart. Here are her tips for making reading clubs a family-school affair:

Look for good grants. The easy part is creating a family reading program. The challenging part is going beyond the initial grant and finding additional funds to keep the club going. You'll need materials printed, books collected, and training updated if you want to offer your families the project they deserve.

Be honest with the parents. Don't be afraid to suggest ways they can help to improve their child's performance, says Brown.

Make sure you know the parents. Are they insecure about their own literacy? Are they uncomfortable in the school setting? Are there books that might reach out to them? The answers will help you.

Don't be afraid to change mid-stream. "Be open to improvements," says Brown. "I'd rather make changes that may be difficult and challenging at first than stay stuck in a comfortable rut and not make a difference."

Use themes to cross cultural boundaries. Choose books with universality, recommends Brown. "Choosing books around the families theme created common ground for our African-American, African immigrant, and Hispanic families," says Brown.

Encourage the groups to mingle. "In the first year, the Hispanics stayed together and the African-American and African immigrant families stayed together," says Brown. "With bilingual books and themes, we found parents sharing their experiences more readily."

If you feed them, they will come. It may sound simple, but food is a great school-community organizer, says Brown. When you order, say what you're doing. You may get donations or discounts, like Brown did from a local pizzeria.

Time to Read and Celebrate!

On your mark, get set, read! The official celebration of NEA's Read Across America and Dr. Seuss's birthday takes place March 3 with reading events and challenges around the country. The 2003 Read Across America Co-chairs Ming-Na and Esai Morales will be coaching a host of celebrity readers in an all-star read-off in Los Angeles. Major League Soccer's 10 teams will kick off the League's reading initiative in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and millions of kids and grown-ups will lift up their voices and read. To find out what's happening in your state and around the country, go to www.nea.org/readacross.

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Where do some of America's best teachers get their inspiration?

From the NEA Professional Library, that's where!

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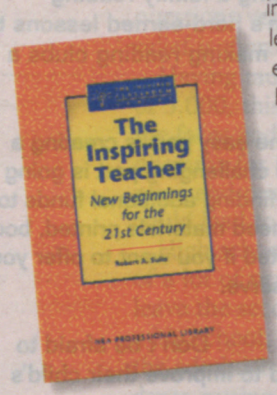

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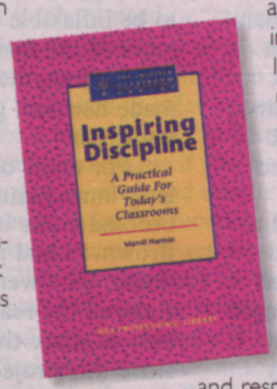

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NEA Today
The Magazine of the National Education Association

Special Report on ESEA

Overhauled ESEA Poses New Hurdles for Teachers, Paras

Remember the tale of Sisyphus? He was the mythological figure condemned to spend his life rolling a huge boulder up a hill—only to have it roll down again when he neared the top.

If you feel a little like Sisyphus these days, that's understandable. Thanks to your hard work, the achievement of public school students has improved over the past two decades. There's no time to rest, however, because the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed by Congress a little more than one year ago piles new mandates on already overburdened teachers and paraprofessionals.

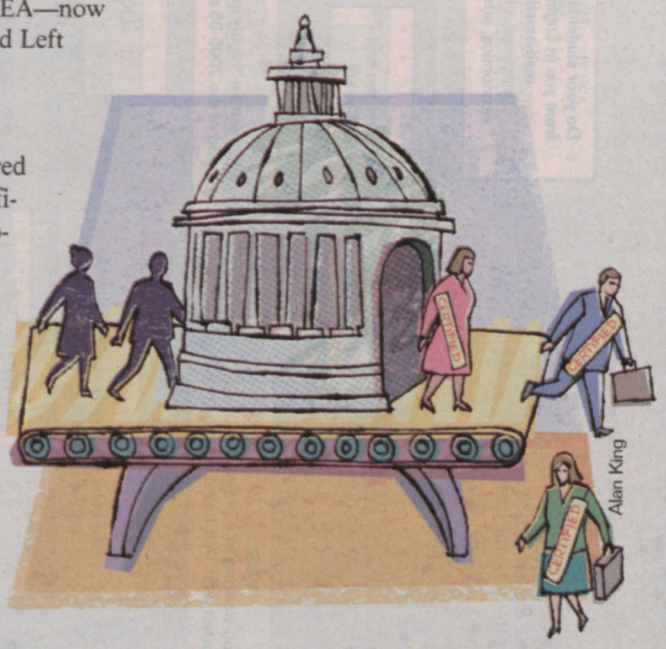
First passed in 1965 as a program to aid disadvantaged students, ESEA—now officially known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—has been overhauled and now includes provisions for student testing, accountability sanctions, required open enrollment, and the qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals. As a result, most NEA members—especially student members, new and veteran teachers, and paras—are wondering how the new ESEA will affect their work.

It's especially important to find out how you are affected by new provisions on teacher and paraprofessional quality. Under the new law, by the end of the 2005-06 school year all teachers of core academic subjects must show that they are highly qualified—by holding a bachelor's degree and state teaching license and demonstrating a high level of competence in the core subjects taught. Newly hired Title I teachers must meet these standards already. In addition, new Title I paraprofessionals must meet increased standards for qualifications, and veteran paras have until the end of the 2005-06 school year to do so.

Sound confusing? This *Special Report on ESEA* provides some specific guidance to sort through the maze of new requirements. The center spread (see next page) on teacher qualifications will help you determine if you meet the provision for being "highly qualified" under ESEA. The back page details the new requirements for paraprofessionals and also includes a resource list to guide you through the massive new law.

Bear in mind that if you do not currently meet the requirements for being "highly qualified," you may be eligible for help meeting the new standards. For example, ESEA's Title II provisions include grants for professional development.

"You should demand that these local funds be used to pay for coursework or professional development you may need to qualify" under the new laws, says Tim Dedman, senior policy analyst with NEA's Department of Teacher Quality. ESEA also allows the use of Title I funds to help paraprofessionals satisfy the new requirements.



Alan King

NEA won important provisions in the crafting of the new ESEA, but, inevitably, the final bill did not reflect all of the changes NEA sought. The Association is now pursuing a four-point strategy to improve ESEA (see box at right). With hard work, maybe that boulder will reach the top of the hill yet.

Five Ways to Improve ESEA

Through legislative action and coalition work, NEA is working to improve the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), focusing on these five areas:

1. Full funding for all federal ESEA requirements at authorized levels in order to meet the achievement goals of the law. Failure to fund ESEA testing, accountability, and/or educator quality requirements should trigger a moratorium on states' and school districts' compliance with those mandates.

2. Limiting the definition of "highly qualified teacher" to include only those teachers who have achieved full licensure/certification under state standards. This should apply to *all* teachers, closing loopholes that apply to educators who work for "supplemental service providers" and charter schools and those seeking alternative certification.

3. Granting states total flexibility in measuring schools' Adequate Yearly Progress. To ensure that schools are not measured solely on the basis of standardized test scores, states should be permitted to include other factors in measuring school performance, including attendance and graduation rates, percentage of students taking Advanced Placement courses, and/or in-grade retention.

4. Granting states total flexibility in applying sanctions to schools identified as "needing improvement." The goal should be to make public schools great for every child by ensuring needed resources and tailoring corrective actions to address specific problems. Additional flexibility would allow states to help turn around struggling schools—by targeting assistance and corrective action to particular areas in need of improvement.

5. Ensuring paraprofessionals the training they need to meet new quality standards—by requiring states and local school districts to fully fund the costs, using federal Title I funds and other funding sources. NEA also supports requiring states to adopt a minimum annual salary of $20,000 for paraprofessionals.

Are You Highly Qualified Under ESEA?

To determine how the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provisions on teacher quality may affect you, follow the flow chart below through the Timelines, Licensure/Certification, and Competency sections.

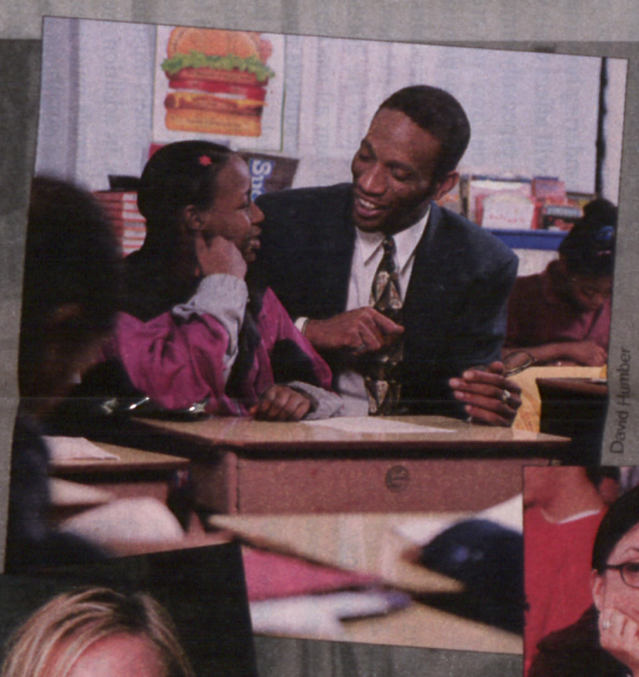
Timelines

Note: "Newly hired" means changing employers, not just changing schools within a district

Do your students receive core content credit from you in English, reading, language arts, mathematics, science, foreign language, civics and government, economics, arts, history, or geography?

- **YES** — Were you "newly hired" after the first day of the 2002-03 school year?
  - **YES** — Are you working in a program supported with Title I funds?
    - **YES** — You must be "highly qualified" in order to be hired → GO TO LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION section
    - **NO** — You must be "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-06 school year → GO TO LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION section
  - **NO** — You must be "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-06 school year → GO TO LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION section
- **NO** — You are NOT required to be "highly qualified" under ESEA

Jim Decker



David Humber

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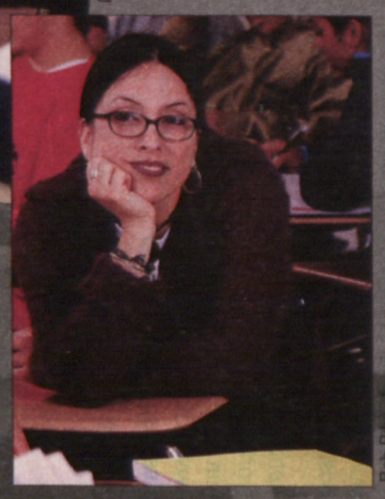

Bob Rashid

Licensure/Certification

Do you have "full certification"? (no waivers on emergency, temporary, or provisional basis)

- **YES** — Go to COMPETENCY section
- **NO** — Have you passed the state licensing test?
  - **YES** — Go to COMPETENCY section
  - **NO** — Do you teach in a charter school that, under your state's charter school law, exempts you from teacher licensing/certification?
    - **YES** — Go to COMPETENCY section
    - **NO** — Are you in an "alternative route" program?
      - **YES** — You must be making progress and complete full certification within three years
        - In addition you must:
          - Receive high quality professional development, before and while teaching, that is sustained, intensive, and focused on classroom instruction
          - Participate in a teacher mentoring program or receive intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support
          - Assume functions as a teacher for a specified period of time, not to exceed three years
          - Demonstrate satisfactory progress toward full certification as prescribed by the state
        - GO TO COMPETENCY section
      - **NO** — You have until 2005-06 to obtain "full certification" or meet criteria for "alternative route"

Competency

Do you have a bachelor's degree?

- **YES** — Do you teach elementary or middle/high?
  - **ELEMENTARY** — Have you demonstrated competence in content and teaching skill by passing a state (licensure) test in reading, writing, mathematics, and other elementary curriculum areas?
    - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
    - **NO** — Are you "new" to the profession?
      - **YES** — You are NOT "highly qualified" and cannot be hired in a program supported with Title I funds
      - **NO** — Have you met your state's HOUSE* requirements?
        - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
        - **NO** — You are NOT "highly qualified" and have until 2005-06 to pass test or meet HOUSE requirements
  - **MIDDLE/HIGH** — Have you passed a state content (licensure) test in EACH of the subjects you teach?
    - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
    - **NO** — Do you have an academic major or coursework equivalent to a major in each of the subjects you teach?
      - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
      - **NO** — Do you have a graduate degree in each of the subjects you teach?
        - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
        - **NO** — Do you have advanced certification (e.g., National Board Certification)?
          - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
          - **NO** — Are you "new" to the profession?
            - **YES** — You are NOT "highly qualified" and cannot be hired in a program supported with Title 1 funds
            - **NO** — Have you met your state's HOUSE* requirements?
              - **YES** — You are "highly qualified"
              - **NO** — You are NOT "highly qualified" and have until 2005-06 to become highly qualified
- **NO** — You are NOT "highly qualified" and cannot be hired in a program supported with Title I funds

Paul Body

* HOUSE = High Objective Uniform Statewide Standard of Evaluation

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Source: NEA Department of Teacher Quality

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ESEA's Impact on Support Professionals

How does the new ESEA affect education support professionals?

The federal law outlines new qualifications for paraprofessionals who work in Title I-funded programs. The requirements do not apply to members of other ESP job groups, non-Title I paraprofessionals, paraprofessionals who work as translators, or paras who conduct parental involvement activities.

What are the requirements for Title I paras?

Newly hired paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or the equivalent and meet one of the following requirements:

- Have an associate's degree;
- Have two years of college; or
- Pass a state or local assessment that demonstrates their knowledge of reading, writing, and math and the ability to assist with instruction.

Paraprofessionals currently working in Title I programs must meet these requirements by 2006.

How do I know if I work in a Title I program?

Check with your principal or school district. If your school has a school-wide Title I program and you assist with instruction, then the requirements probably apply to you. If your school receives targeted assistance, check to see if Title I funds your position.

How can paraprofessionals protect themselves?

Collect documentation of education, including a high school diploma or GED certificate and transcripts for any college courses taken. Also, document conference and workshop attendance and other professional development completed.

If paraprofessionals choose to meet the ESEA requirements by taking college courses, they should find out what financial assistance their school district provides to employees seeking additional education. The federal law says school districts can use Title I money for professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals.

If paraprofessionals currently do not meet the ESEA requirements, they should find out what assessment their state or school district plans to implement for paraprofessionals.

If paras do not work in a Title I program, they may want to satisfy the requirements of ESEA anyway to increase their flexibility and job security.

What does the law say about the duties assigned to Title I paraprofessionals?

Title I paraprofessionals may assist with classroom management; assist in a computer lab, library, or media center; translate; and conduct parental involvement activities. Paras may not provide direct instruction except under the direct supervision of a teacher or in one-on-one tutoring outside normal class time. For instance, it is now against the law to use a Title I-funded paraprofessional instead of a substitute teacher.

Title I paraprofessionals also may perform other functions that benefit all students, such as monitoring a lunchroom, playground, or study hall; however, the amount of time they spend on these general duties may not exceed the amount of time non-Title I paras spend on similar activities.

Resources

- The National Education Association's homepage provides ample material on ESEA, from the specific provisions of the law to ways the Association is working to improve it. www.nea.org/esea/

- Also, Be sure to visit the ESEA section of the NEA ESP website at www.nea.org/esphome/issues/eseapara.html. The site includes an overview of the law, implications for paraprofessionals, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to NEA's four brochures about what ESEA means for paras. Read the brochures online or download copies.

- The U.S. Department of Education maintains a website dedicated to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The site includes an overview of the law's requirements in text form, a glossary of terms, fact sheets, an online newsletter, and links to other useful websites. www.nochildleftbehind.gov/ Also, you can look up your district's FY 2002 Title I allocations by going to www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/TitleILEAs/FY02allocations/index.html.

- Keep up with state activities related to ESEA by visiting the Education Commission of the States website and clicking on the icon for No Child Left Behind. The site includes summaries of legislation and policies enacted by states in response to ESEA. The site also links to the National Conference of State Legislatures for additional information. www.ecs.org

- *Education Week* maintains an archive of articles on new ESEA provisions and the ways that schools and states are responding to it. www.edweek.org/context/topics/issuespage.cfm?id=59

Quick Skims from *NEA Today*

Browse the following *NEA Today* articles from the past year to learn more about ESEA:

- "Congress Passes Sweeping Education Law" provides an overview of the major provisions of the new ESEA. March 2002. www.nea.org/neatoday/0203/news14.html

- "Who is 'Highly Qualified'?" examines how teachers and paraprofessionals are affected by new rules on qualifications. March 2002. www.nea.org/neatoday/0203/scoop.html

- "A Tough Law Deserves Tough Questions" features the reactions of Maryland members to the new ESEA. April 2002. www.nea.org/neatoday/0204/news14.html

- "Yearly Progress—Or Else" explains how schools will be affected by the ESEA's provisions regarding "adequate yearly progress." November 2002. www.nea.org/neatoday/0211/scoop.html

- "High-stakes Questions" explains the current state of student testing under ESEA. March 2003. www.nea.org/neatoday/0303/cover.html

This special section of NEA Today *was compiled by John O'Neil, Kristen Loschert, and Dave Winans.*

Helping Students with Special Needs

Dear Web Editor,

One of my students is visually impaired. This student can type essays into a word processor, but she cannot read papers or comments that other students make during peer editing.

Where can I find a tool that translates other student work into a "readable" form for the visually impaired student and, in turn, allows the student to comment on the work of her peers?

As you've already discovered, the World Wide Web is a big place. Locating the best information about assistive technology (AT) and accessibility solutions for students with disabilities can take hours.

Fortunately, NEA is working on a way to speed up your Web searches. The Accessible Classroom Project, a venture between NEA, Johns Hopkins University, the IDEA Partnerships, Verizon, and others will produce a content-rich website for information about assistive technology and accessibility issues. The project team anticipates an August 2003 launch for the website.

The site will include practical lessons on assistive technology; guidelines, reviews, and analysis of accessibility applications; testimonials from AT users about specific technologies; interactive message boards; and strategies for advocating on behalf of students with special needs. Users also will find state-specific resources including government programs, organizations, and advocacy groups serving students with disabilities.

You can learn more about the project and its partners by visiting www.makingthegrade.org/assistive.

In the meantime, check out the following resources for information on helping students with special needs:

- The Center for Applied Special Technology recently released a new book called *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age*, available for free online at www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent.
- The Council for Exceptional Children, located at www.cec.sped.org, offers professional development and training resources.
- For comprehensive and up-to-date information on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) visit www.ideapractices.org. The IDEA Partnerships, a group of four national projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), operates the website in an effort to deliver a common message about the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA. The site also includes resources on assessment and accommodation materials.
- The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Children at www.ericec.org also offers fact sheets and links to other online resources.
- AbleData at www.abledata.com contains a database of information on thousands of AT products with detailed descriptions, pricing, and company information. The site also includes noncommercial prototypes and do-it-yourself designs.
- You can access the most current information about NEA's policies regarding IDEA's reauthorization at www.nea.org/specialed.

QUICK TIP

If you want to use technology to teach about government and politics, check out a free CD-ROM from the Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI), a project of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. In the CD-ROM *A More Perfect Union*, students portray political campaign managers for a fictional state. They schedule candidates' appearances, purchase polls and advertisements, and listen to debates as they try to beat their opponents. The CD-ROM contains video graphics that respond to individual student decisions and a link to the YLI website. The website offers a searchable database of state and federal legislators; online lessons for middle and high school students; course units on demographics, campaign commercials, polling, and ethics; and a resource guide for teachers. For more information, visit www.youthleadership.net or call 866/514-8389. ✔

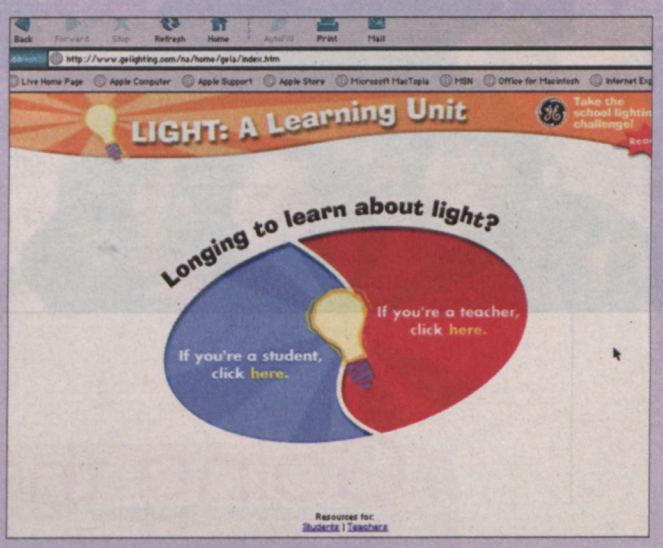
GOT A QUESTION?

Ask the Web editor at webeditor@list.nea.org. Or send your questions by regular mail to *NEA Today* or by fax to 202/822-7206.

Editor's Pick

Light: A Learning Unit

General Electric has created an interactive website to teach middle school students about light and electricity. At www.gelighting.com/na/home/gela/index.htm teachers will find units on filaments, prisms, wattage, and electricity. The units include science lessons on the properties of light, math lessons on light measurement, and history lessons about Thomas Edison. Each lesson takes three to six 30- to 40-minute class periods to cover and includes hands-on activities and experiments. The site also includes assessment tools, suggested readings, and links to other useful websites.



OWL Watch

OWL.org FAQ

This month we share some frequently asked questions about OWL.org, the online community for NEA members.

What's the difference between OWL.org and NEA.org?

OWL.org is the new website for NEA members. It provides practical information, tools, and services to help educators do their jobs. The site focuses on members and "Educators Helping Educators." NEA.org is the Association's public website. This is where the Association presents its programs and perspectives to members, nonmembers, and the general public.

I registered at OWL, but I forgot my user ID and password. What should I do?

If you have any problems getting onto the OWL.org site, send a note to the customer care team at asktheowl@owl.org and someone will help you.

When I sign on to the OWL website, I see only one page of content. Where are the other content "channels"?

OWL offers registration to both NEA members and nonmembers. Registered NEA members can access the entire site, including discussion boards and all of the content channels. Registered nonmembers see a limited selection of content on a single page.

If you see only one page of content, you probably are registered incorrectly as a nonmember. E-mail customer care at asktheowl@owl.org to get the proper NEA member access.

OWL.ORG
OUR WEB LOCATION FOR EDUCATION
A service of the National Education Association and its State and Local Affiliates

Where do I find articles for education support professionals?

Visitors to OWL.org can customize the "My Profession" channel to suit their job needs. The site offers one version for teachers and one for ESP members. To set your profile to view ESP content, visit www.owl.org and click on the "set preferences" link on the right side of the page. Go to the field called "select your profession," select "Education Support Professionals," and save your profile. This will automatically load ESP content into the My Profession channel.

ESP

[ESEA]

No Para Left Behind

Local Associations help members meet new federal requirements.

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) may be on the books, but that doesn't mean support professionals are on their own as they work to meet the federal law's new requirements.

ESEA, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, outlines specific qualifications for paraprofessionals who work in Title I-funded programs. These paras must have a high school diploma and either an associate's degree, two years of college, or a passing score on a state or local assessment that demonstrates their ability to assist with instruction in reading, writing, and math.

Newly hired paraprofessionals must meet the requirements immediately, while those hired before January 8, 2002, have until 2006.

Among NEA members, 66 percent of paraprofessionals have less than a two-year degree, according to the 2002 NEA ESP Membership Study. Local Associations across the country are helping paraprofessionals meet the federal requirements by organizing continuing education programs, offering test-taking workshops, and even bargaining for additional compensation and release time for professional development.

In the Trenton Paraprofessional Association (TPA) in New Jersey, about 75 percent of the local's 300 members currently do not meet the education requirements of ESEA. The local wanted to help members obtain the college credits they needed, but transportation issues and time demands make it difficult for many paras to attend classes on campus, says local President Betty Glenn. So, TPA arranged for several two- and four-year colleges to provide classes at a local high school.

TPA also bargained tuition reimbursement into its contract. The district pays tuition expenses up front, so the paraprofessionals never pay anything out of pocket. The local also organized a workshop to help those paraprofessionals who return to college. About 130 paras have enrolled in the college classes.

The Classified School Employees Council of Las Cruces, New Mexico, secured additional education for its paraprofessionals as well.

The local worked with the Las Cruces Public Schools, Doña Ana Branch Community College, and New

Betty Glenn worries the ESEA requirements will keep local residents from becoming paraprofessionals and schools will lose an important community connection.

Going the Extra Mile

Technology Outreach

The 400 ESPs who belong to the Kenosha Education Association (KEA) in Wisconsin now have regular access to two computers, a printer, and a digital camera the local purchased with a $3,482 NEA ESP Technology Grant.

Members of the local Association hope the increased computer access and Internet connections will enhance members' technology education and their involvement with other Associations, says ESP representative **Kathleen Lusiak**.

KEA members now have e-mail access, and can write letters to legislators and voice their concerns more effectively.

Computer-savvy members have volunteered to help their colleagues who may need a few pointers about using the new computers and the Internet, Lusiak says.

"It is definitely an opportunity for ESP to get involved with technology," she adds.

Read All About It

The Specialists in Education Association of Cheyenne, Wyoming (SEA), has a regular newsletter and a permanent website because of a $3,490 NEA ESP Technology Grant the local received in August.

The local Association used the grant to buy a laptop computer, printer, and digital camera. Members used the new equipment to redesign the local's newsletter, add pictures, and increase its circulation. The local also updated its website to provide members with contract information.

SEA President **Julie Tucker** says ESP members are pleased to have a website that provides more accurate and current information about the Association and its members.

Professional Development

The Pinellas Educational Support Professional Association (PESPA) in Florida is using a $3,500 NEA ESP Technology Grant to help ESPs incorporate technology into their jobs.

PESPA used the funds to purchase a laptop computer and a projector. The local also organized a cadre of tech-savvy local leaders to help train interested members to use the technology.

If the sessions are successful, PESPA may increase the number of laptops available and offer additional training opportunities.

For more information on the NEA ESP Technology Grants, visit www.nea.org/esphome/members/techgrnt.html. Apply by April 15, 2003, for the 2003-04 grants.

Mexico State University to create a "career ladder" for paraprofessionals, says Irma Valdespino, president of the local. The school district pays tuition for paras who pursue an associate's degree at the community college. Paras then can apply those credits toward a bachelor's degree at New Mexico State University, where the school district also covers the cost of tuition and books.

Paraprofessionals who complete 60 credit hours advance on the salary schedule as well, says Milas McLeod, a middle school paraprofessional and vice president of the local Association. This spring, the local will bargain for additional compensation to reflect the new standards paraprofessionals must meet.

"To retain these people the district will have to restructure the salary scale," McLeod says. "As people get better educated, they [school officials] are going to have to pay better."

But for many paraprofessionals returning to college isn't feasible or affordable.

In Trenton, for example, many paraprofessionals work a second job and can't afford to leave to attend college classes, says Glenn.

Those paraprofessionals can complete a state or local assessment to satisfy ESEA.

Members of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) turned their state paraprofessional assessment into an organizing tool.

Through its Center for Teaching and Learning, NCAE offers local and regional workshops to prepare paraprofessionals for WorkKeys®, the assessment selected by the state department of education for ESEA.

The Association offers the workshops only to NCAE members, so UniServ directors and local presidents publicize them during membership recruitment drives, says Angela Farthing, manager of the Center for Teaching and Learning. ESP membership has increased 25 percent since the workshops started in August, she says.

More than 60 percent of paraprofessionals who complete the workshops pass WorkKeys the first time, Farthing says. Those who don't, receive remediation or attend additional review sessions.

Ultimately, though, ESEA demands more from paraprofessionals than just additional college credits or a passing test score.

Glenn of TPA worries the federal law will decrease the connection paraprofessionals have with the children in their communities. School officials may look outside their districts to find qualified candidates if the new requirements discourage local people from applying for the position, she says.

Most paras live in the area where their schools are and watch over the children in their neighborhoods, Glenn says. "But the children will lose that personal touch because the new people who come in won't be coming from the neighborhood. That leaves a child behind." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Photos by Norman Y. Lono

[PROFILE]

Tasty Morsels

Dan Loftin

Name: Kathy Creasy

Job Title: School Nutrition Manager, White House Middle School, White House, Tennessee

What I Do in My Job: I prepare menus, order food, stock inventory, and ensure that we meet federal and state regulations. We make lunch for 85 percent of our children and provide them with a variety of food choices such as a full salad bar, specialty salads, a weekly soup bar, and international menus. I also go into the classrooms and teach the kids about nutrition in different ways.

The Most Rewarding Part of My Job: When the kids come into the cafeteria and compliment us. I consider them our customers.

My Favorite Pastime: Cooking and making crafts.

My Greatest Passion: All of the projects we do. We have been teaching the children about world hunger and helping them to recognize malnutrition and the factors behind it. Our kids made a contribution to a local 9/11 fund and frequently visit www.thehungersite.com, which gives a needy child one-quarter cup of food every time someone clicks on the site.

How I've Helped My Association: I give presentations on how to incorporate nutrition into all subjects such as science, English, and healthy living.

My Community Involvement Includes: I'm an adult education teacher and I work with my community center to sponsor monthly potlucks and an annual craft fair that gives scholarships to high school graduates.

A Little-Known Fact About Me: I am a very young grandmother and I love every minute of it. ✔

RESOURCES

ESEA and Paraprofessionals
Be sure to visit the ESEA section of the NEA ESP website at www.nea.org/esphome/issues/eseapara.html. The site includes an overview of the law, implications for paraprofessionals, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to NEA's four brochures about ESEA's impact on paraprofessionals. You can read the brochures online or download copies. Additional information about ESEA and its requirements for schools is available on NEA's ESEA website at www.nea.org/esea/.

ESEA on the Web
The U.S. Department of Education maintains a website dedicated to the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act for parents and the general public. The site includes an overview of the law's requirements in text form and as a PowerPoint® presentation. The site also offers a glossary of terms, fact sheets, an online newsletter, and links to other useful websites. Visit the website at www.nochildleftbehind.gov/. Information also is available from the Department of Education website at www.ed.gov/nclb/.

State by State
Keep up with state activities related to ESEA by visiting the Education Commission of the States website at www.ecs.org and clicking on the icon for No Child Left Behind. The site includes summaries of legislation and policies enacted by states in response to ESEA and corresponding Web links. The site also links to the National Conference of State Legislatures for additional information.

Introducing
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NEA members and their families can now enjoy one of the best values available in long distance.

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Adding Up Assets Before Retiring

Q: I am a recently widowed teacher who plans to retire in four years at age 55. I have approximately $60,000 left from my husband's life insurance policies, a mortgage of almost $1,900 per month for 16 years, and two PLUS loans, which will soon total $400 a month. I have a gasoline card that runs no more than $70 per month, a monthly personal loan of $105 (until August 2004), and a car lease of $378 (until June 2003). Should I retire as I have planned? What should I do with the insurance money?

A: You've provided lots of information, but it isn't enough for such a serious question. Your list of expenses totals over $2,850 per month, yet you give no sense of what your retirement income would be. The only asset you mention is the $60,000 in life insurance proceeds. Would you have only the teacher pension? Do you have 403 (b) money?

With no more information than you've provided, I would advise against retirement. Given today's life expectancies, you are probably at mid-life. That means you could spend half your life not working. What would you do with your time?

I suspect you want to make changes in your life, to begin anew. That makes a great deal of sense. But there are many options other than retirement.

If I'm wrong and retirement is truly your dream, then you must sit down and list all your prospective income and your expenses. Don't forget the cost of health care before you're eligible for Medicare and the cost of inflation. Will you be able to continue meeting expenses 10, 20, or 30 years down the road? Be sure your financial needs will be taken care of before making any decision.

What you do with the insurance money depends on what you ultimately plan to use it for. If you plan to invest for the long term, you might put it in a good balanced fund. Balanced funds invest in both the stock and bond market. If you are very risk averse or if you plan to tap into the money soon, you should probably put it into bank certificates of deposit or a money market fund.

Q: I consolidated my Stafford Loans (through Sallie Mae) a few years ago with an interest rate of 8.5 percent. Now that interest rates are so low, can I get a lower interest rate?

A: We've received so many questions about student loans that I began looking for some resources. Several Internet sites such as www.staffordloan.com provide information on the loans. I also found a Nolo Press book called *Take Control of Your Student Loan Debt.*

I'm not sure this has put me any closer to an answer for you, though. Both the online services and the book say that the direct loan consolidation program offers variable interest rates that never exceed 8.25 percent. The Nolo book adds that Sallie Mae will cut your interest rate by 0.25 percent if you authorize automatic payments from your checking account and will knock off 1 percent if you make your loan payments on time for 48 consecutive months. If your rate is 8.5 percent, call the lender and ask why.

Q: In the November column, you responded to a single mom who had been teaching for 28 years and wanted to know what to do with the money used for mortgage payments when she paid off her house. Why didn't you mention a 403 (b) (tax sheltered annuity) as a possible benefit? Or a Roth IRA? Omitting such opportunities seems like a significant oversight.

A: You're absolutely right. Writing financial advice for educators can be tricky because they are such a knowledgeable bunch. I focused on the teacher's question about buying a car and neglected to suggest the important vehicles you mention.

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Kathleen Arola, a fifth-grade teacher in Phoenix, Arizona.

Festive Hall Passes
Looking for handy hall passes? Try Mardi Gras beaded necklaces in the colors of your local professional sports team. School colors could also be used. They can be worn around the neck or wrapped around the wrist.

Different colors can stand for different types of passes, and if necessary, little laminated labels can be stapled around each necklace.

Notes with an Edge
Instead of buying thank you cards for parent volunteers, holiday presents from children, or help from colleagues, write a note on a construction paper shape cut from the die cut machine.

To thank a child for a suncatcher with a hummingbird on it, write a message on a bird-shaped paper. To thank someone for doing a special deed, write on a star.

Use shapes for other notes as well. For example, to apologize for a misunderstanding, jot down a note on a turkey ("I'm sorry for being such a turkey!"). The possibilities are endless.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

Don Bishop/Artville

Ninety-seven percent of NEA Home Financing Program participants would recommend the mortgage loan program to other members.

Heads Up From NEA Member Benefits

Thousands of NEA members and their families have used the NEA Home Financing Program® to obtain a new mortgage, refinance an existing mortgage, or take out a home equity loan. Now you can set your sights on being in your new home or make those long-awaited home improvements by summer. With the many options offered by NEA, there's sure to be a program that suits your needs!

Are you a renter dreaming of buying your first home? First-time buyers can take advantage of special low- and no-money down home loans that feature no maximum income restrictions. Plus, flexible credit guidelines can get you into a home sooner than you might think.

Thinking about refinancing? It's a popular option for homeowners who want to lower their monthly payments, reduce their mortgage term, or get cash out. Depending on how long you stay in your home, you could save a significant amount of money through interest rate and tax advantages.

Want to turn the equity in your home into real cash? With an NEA home equity loan, you'll get the money you need to make home improvements, consolidate debts, or purchase that new car or truck.

For information on a new mortgage, to get a free break-even analysis for refinancing purposes, or to find out how a home equity loan or line of credit can work for you, call the NEA Home Financing Program at 800/NEA-4-YOU (800/632-4968). Also, see the ad on page 42 to learn about a bonus offer for members!

Rx for Kids: Exercise!

Students are becoming as sedentary as many adults—to their peril. But with a bit of know-how, educators can help get them moving again.

Tom Cleary

Kids need motivation to exercise, says John Dunlop, a P.E. teacher at Lake Center Elementary School.

Remember when after-school fun meant running through the park, swinging through the trees, or catching a good game of softball? These days kids have traded their sneakers for joysticks and video games—and the health results are not anything to boast about.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 13 percent children ages 6 to 17 are officially overweight, and increasing numbers are suffering from Type II diabetes and a host of other obesity-related illnesses that may only worsen with age. Indeed, one recent U.S. Surgeon General's report found that overweight children have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults and susceptible to life threatening diseases such as heart disease and high blood pressure.

It's not news to many educators, who every day see the impact of poor health on academic achievement. Kids who are not fit have been shown to have less energy and be more restless than healthier kids, for example. A wide-ranging study by the California Department of Education found that fit students in that state do better in math, reading, and writing and have better cognitive skills, increased concentration, and higher self-esteem than unfit students. Yet across the country, cutbacks in physical education programs have meant that one in four students get no physical education in school—and most get less than an hour a week.

Students at Lake Center Elementary School exercise hard with drills they like.

What can educators do? First, say health experts, they can join the national initiative, Action for Healthy Kids, which addresses negative health trends and creates healthier schools. Last October the organization held its first Healthy Schools Summit, chaired by former Surgeon General David Satcher. The summit assembled experts from more than 30 national education and health organizations, including the NEA Health Information Network, and discussed ways to help children develop healthy lifestyles. Participants divided into state teams that meet periodically to pinpoint programs that are working. But already, many NEA members are doing their part.

• **Yvonne Baicich**, a P.E. teacher at Kingsford Elementary School in Mitchellville, Maryland, says she and her colleagues "heavily" promote fitness all year round and strongly urge teachers at their school to incorporate movement into their curriculum. She says it's just one way to compensate for the shortage of physical education hours required by law. "We see kids running around the green top in the middle of the day for five minutes, and it's just great," she says.

• **John Dunlop**, a P.E. teacher at Lake Center Elementary School in Portage, Michigan, has been using Polar® heart rate monitors to make kids more aware of cardiovascular fitness. The monitors—which are strapped to a chest belt and send a pulse signal to a watch—have helped his kids individualize their fitness goals and exercise in their target zones. Dunlop, whose project was funded by a grant from The NEA Foundation, says kids need motivation to exercise daily—and helping them through drills and activities they like is a good start.

• **Kristie Andres** of Fairhope Elementary School in Fairhope, Alabama, last year formed a schoolwide running program. For every 10 miles her kids ran, Andres tracked their miles on a huge map. "As more students pushed and challenged themselves and each other, pretty soon the running became contagious," she says. This school year Andres is getting her P.E. students to pretend they are running around the country—but on the school's quarter-mile track.

• **Paul Shimon**, a P.E. teacher in Arkansas City, Kansas, established a Run Across America program for third, fourth, and fifth graders at Adams Elementary School. "My kids are so excited about running they come into the classroom asking, 'Are we going to to run today?'" Shimon keeps his kids going with motivational Popsicles®. ✔

—Leah Lakins

FOR MORE:

Visit the Action for Healthy Kids website at www.ActionForHealthyKids.org. Read the Surgeon General's report on obesity at www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/ and on physical activity and health at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/sgr.htm.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ✔ **Encourage your kids to participate in more outdoor activities. "We can't just place all the blame on McDonald's®," says Dunlop. "We have to help them strive harder to be more active."**
- ✔ **Lobby to change your state's policy on physical education. It was that kind of advocacy that last year convinced the Texas State Board of Educators to pass a law requiring all students in grades K-6 to have 30 minutes of physical education every day.**
- ✔ **Be a good example for healthy living. Move with your students—and suggest wholesome snacks.**
- ✔ **Encourage parents to get involved in activities with their kids.**

What's Up at HIN?

NEA Health Information Network

GUN SAFETY: GET READY

In August 2000, the NEA Representative Assembly passed a new business item that required NEA to pursue efforts to keep schools and children safe from gun violence. NEA and NEA HIN's Gun Safety Project is now aggressively working to improve gun safety and protect schools and communities while respecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners. This spring, NEA-HIN will provide information to members about new gun safety proposals that improve enforcement of existing gun laws and that prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands. Stay tuned. To get more information, visit www.neahin.org/gunsafety.

CANCER SCREENING BARRIERS

A recent evaluation of HIN's campaign for breast and cervical health, Project REACH, showed that even procrastinators can be motivated to get the cancer screenings recommended by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One research finding indicated that certain attitudes and feelings (dislike, fear, embarrassment) were easier to overcome than scheduling difficulties and time constraints. To read a summary of the research results or to find out more about Project REACH, visit http://neahin.org/programs/cancerinfo/reach/index.htm.

ONLINE AIR QUALITY TOOL KIT

The EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools (IAQ TfS) Program has developed a new resource to complement its IAQ TfS Kit. This new resource, Indoor Air Quality Design Tools for Schools, is a Web-based guide for school personnel, parents, communities, and others who are undertaking school construction and renovation projects. The site offers recommendations on topics such as controlling moisture to prevent mold and damage to building materials and systems, renovation of existing schools, and more. To access the site, visit http://epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign.

[ROAD TO WELLNESS]

Depression or Just the Blues?

Artville

Depression can linger in your life without apparent reason, but understanding this illness can be an important step toward healing and recovery.

You've got a staff meeting to attend, papers to grade, bills to pay, kids to feed—and the in-laws are coming. Like many stressed out people, you wish you could stop the world and jump off. Only thing, *you'd* opt to never get back on. Despair, self-doubt, sadness—you're feeling it all.

If this is you, clinical depression could be the cause—just as it is for more than 18 million Americans, according to the National Institute for Mental Health. Unfortunately, most people don't realize depression is treatable, and among those who do, many often fail to seek help. That's because many depression sufferers continue to perform everyday tasks just fine—and are convinced that their "blues" is nothing to whine about.

Yet, says Vanessa Jackson, a clinical psychologist in Atlanta, those "blues" can actually be serious business. When people quietly ignore prolonged feelings of helplessness, low self-esteem, and anxiety, even thoughts of suicide, for example, a severe breakdown of mind and body can result.

How to get help? Here are some tips.

Learn the difference—the 'real' thing or just a bad day?

The key is duration. How long, honestly, has this rotten feeling lasted? Check out the following symptoms, and if you've experienced five or more for two weeks or longer, says Jackson, it's time to "get real" and get help.

- sad or anxious feelings
- oversleeping or insomnia
- weight loss or gain, appetite changes
- loss of pleasure
- suicidal thoughts
- fatigue
- restlessness and irritability
- trouble concentrating
- physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches that don't respond to treatment.

Don't be shy

First, check with your physician to rule out medical abnormalities, advises NEA's Mental Health Coordinator Angela Oddone. Then seek help from a therapist. And remember, says Jackson, finding one doesn't have to be intimidating or frightening.

"It's normal to have fear when deciding to visit a therapist," Jackson says. But to put yourself at ease, she suggests getting recommendations from friends or colleagues. Then, after making sure your insurance will cover the costs, call the therapist for a telephone chat or face-to-face consultation and decide if you are comfortable with him or her. Your work with the therapist is a partnership, Jackson says, and developing trust so you can be honest about your feelings is essential. "Therapy will not be useful unless you are willing to do the work," says Jackson. If seeing a therapist is too daunting, try having a talk with a spiritual leader or a trusted friend. Oftentimes simply talking through your problems can help you alleviate stress and gain a different perspective on a situation.

Know your options

If you are diagnosed with any form of depression, don't be overly quick to jump on the Prozac wagon. Some forms of depression can be treated with psychotherapy alone. If you do require anti-depressants, Jackson recommends first talking with your doctor about trying herbal or non-prescription alternatives like St. John's Wort and SAM-e. She also suggests B-12 vitamins for mild depression. However you decide to treat your depression, look at the whole picture and combine your treatment with vigorous exercise—it helps stir up those "feel-good" endorphins—nutritious foods, and a strong shoulder to lean on.

Accentuate the positive

The challenge of educating children while maintaining a stress-free and happy life can be overwhelming. A mountain of un-graded papers and yet another parent-teacher conference can be enough to knock you off-kilter. But allow yourself to be human, and do what you need to do to get through your bad day. "Get rid of the perfectionist attitude," Jackson advises. "Ask yourself what you can do to improve your life and take steps to get there." When the dust clears, find ways to relieve your stress, know your limitations, and stay realistic. Life is a winding road. But if you stay proactive, you don't have to let depression prevent you from being your best. ✔

—Leah Lakins

FOR MORE:
Visit www.nimh.nih.gov/ and www.neahin.org.

Artville

Need Stress Relief?

Take a day off. Don't worry, the world will go on without you. Use your day to catch up on a book, finish a house project, watch some old movies, sleep in, or do nothing. Don't feel guilty. You deserve it.

Scream. That's right. Let your lungs release all that pent-up rage—over that driver who cut you off, that parent whose child can do no wrong, those persistent telemarketers. The scream can get some good oxygen flowing to the heart. And it might even make you laugh.

Be a kid. You work with them every day, so why not act like one now and again? Paint, draw, blow bubbles, watch a cartoon, run wild, skip—and while you're at it, learn how to play one of those video games you're always snubbing your nose at.

HEALTHY BITES

BROWN BAGGIN' IT

Ready to turn tuna fish into a gourmet treat? Try a niçoise salad or sandwich.

Start with high-quality tuna, and prepare a boiled egg. For a salad, layer romaine or other lettuce (even fresh spinach) in a container and add the tuna. Then add freshly ground black pepper to taste and a pinch of dill. Top with sliced or grated carrots and a sliced egg. Drizzle with a little olive oil and wine vinegar, and you're good to go.

To really round off a special lunch, add a whole grain roll. Pack with an apple or banana and biscotti, and just say "yum."

For a sandwich, mix the tuna lightly with the olive oil, vinegar, black pepper, and dill. Layer on bread with lettuce, grated carrots, and sliced egg.

INSPIRE ME

"I belly dance at least once a week. It's a great way to stay fit and a good excuse to wear sequins!"

Amie Hill
Reading Support Specialist
Evergreen Spanaway, Washington

GOOD QUESTION!

Q: What is Pilates all about?

A: Pilates is total body conditioning that involves more than 600 specific exercises performed on a mat or using uniquely designed equipment. The emphasis is on strengthening the abdomen, buttocks, thighs, and lower back. Intense engagement of the muscles in these areas produces improvement in posture and body shape. Because Pilates is very body-specific, classes are usually taught in one-on-one sessions or very small groups.

TALK TO US

This is part of a series designed to help NEA members develop healthy habits that beat stress and improve well-being. If you have a comment or question, e-mail mmilloy@nea.org.

In the Wilderness

For Minnesota teacher **Linda Kastl,** getting to school involves a lot more than driving a car down the nearest street.

In the winter, Kastl uses a snowmobile to roar through the early-morning darkness to the Angle Inlet School. In fall and spring, she travels in a 12-foot fishing boat.

As the teacher of what is believed to be the only one-room public school in Minnesota—located at the northernmost point of the 48 contiguous states—Kastl plans four different lessons for nine students in grades two, three, four, and six. She also organizes all of the holiday programs, spring concerts, music and art programs, and even troubleshoots the computer when something goes wrong.

"Some have compared me to a modern-day Laura Ingalls Wilder, and I guess that's true," Kastl says. "I sometimes miss the companionship of other teachers, but being here is a perfect fit for me."

Kastl has taught at the K-6 school since 1985, except for the two years it closed because of low enrollment. With only 100 full-time residents in Angle Inlet—a resort town that borders Canada—Kastl says she relies heavily on community and family involvement.

Photos by Janet Hostetter

"People would do just about anything for the kids and this school," she says.

Thanks to community donations, each child now has a computer with high-speed Internet access. Cell phones and underwater electric cables helped modernize the school as well, and television is no longer limited to one Canadian station.

"The technology has certainly connected us to places beyond our community," she says. "We even have regular UPS delivery now despite the fact that drivers have to enter Canada and then cross back into Minnesota to get to us."

The remote location of her school hasn't diminished Kastl's commitment to her students.

"I feel an awesome responsibility to these kids because I'm the only teacher they know in the early grades," she adds. "Being here is my life, and I wouldn't have it any other way." ✔

—Dina S. Gómez

Community Outreach

For the past seven years, hundreds of students at Orr Middle School in Las Vegas have been clothed and fed thanks to a program supervised by **Virginia Mills,** a campus monitor at the school.

"The Orr Community," as Mills calls the program, receives food and clothing donations from staff, teachers, and students, who also volunteer to fold and sort clothing and organize food drives. Mills collects nonperishable food items, such as canned soups, because many of the children do not have refrigerators or stoves at home.

Jim Decker

The program also provides T-shirts, shorts, shoes, and pants to students with old clothing, says Mills, a member of the Education Support Employees Association in Clark County, Nevada.

School staff members and teachers refer students to the clothing bank or students can come on their own. Mills also pulls students aside if she suspects they need clothing. Students even receive clothing for special occasions and school events.

The program uses additional donations from toy and music stores to reward students who perform well academically and regularly attend school.

"I am passionate about helping children because they are so honest and sincere," Mills says. ✔

—Irene Arce

Making a Splash

Imagine holding your breath long enough to swim the entire length of a pool. Now imagine holding a teammate above the water while you swim. That's the strength and stamina you need for synchronized swimming. And **Judy Dawson** is up to the challenge.

As a member of a national masters synchronized swimming team, Dawson knows all about the demands, and the rewards, of her chosen sport.

Dawson and her seven teammates train up to four times a week to build the leg strength and lung capacity they need for their routines. The sport requires swimmers to hold their bodies above water—and hold their breath below it—for extended periods of time as they form elegant poses without touching the bottom of the pool.

"It takes so much strength, but I like the idea of overcoming my body and that I can control what I'm doing," Dawson says. "I like the discipline of the sport and the camaraderie of being with a group that has the same interest."

Dawson, a physical education teacher, discovered synchronized swimming in high school. The sport capitalized on her love of swimming, and she spent three years performing in swim shows as a teenager. She reconnected with the sport during her early years of teaching by coaching the synchronized swimming team at Southwestern Academy in Flint, Michigan, where she still teaches.

Two years ago, a fellow swimming teacher approached her about forming a masters team. Dawson dove right in.

"We're not trying to be the top competitors in the nation, we've just found a little niche that a few of us are able to do well," Dawson says. "It's a real feeling that we have to have one another to do this. Once you commit to the team, you can't back off." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Never Walk Alone

John Connolly

Michael Quan

Zach Galvin knows the value of a good pair of walking shoes. For the past five years, Galvin has participated in the Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk to raise money for treatment and research at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Massachusetts. During that time, he has raised more than $87,000 for the cause.

Participants usually walk the 26.2-mile course in memory of someone who has died from the disease or to support a survivor. But Galvin, a high school English teacher, has firsthand experience walking in a survivor's footsteps.

In 1996, one week after he interviewed for his current position at Natick High School, Galvin learned he had stage four Hodgkin's disease. His treatment involved six months of chemotherapy, followed by six weeks of daily radiation sessions. During his treatment, Galvin missed only two days of school. Teaching and sharing his story with co-workers and students helped Galvin deal with his illness, he says.

Then in spring of 1998, during a visit to the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Galvin saw a poster promoting the walk. Without hesitation, he put on his sneakers.

"I thought I could pay back what Dana Farber had done for me by raising some money," Galvin says. Galvin celebrates six years of remission this month.

His first three years on the walk, Galvin raised a total of $22,500. For the fourth year, Galvin formed a 12-person fund-raising team that raised $20,000. This past September, Galvin added 50 people to his team, including his mentor teacher from his student teaching days—a woman who survived her own battle with cancer last year. The group raised more than $45,000.

"I owe everything that I am doing right now to the fact that I was sick with cancer," Galvin says. "Unless you've had it and lived through it, it's difficult to understand, but this was the best thing that ever happened to me. It made me a better person." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Kristen Loschert, section editor, at kloschert@nea.org.

Prescription for Penmanship

NEA-Retired member **Kathleen Adams** of Nebraska makes sure that doctors with poor penmanship dot every i and cross every t. Because when doctors scribble, Isordil can become Plendil, and that's a prescription for trouble.

After 29 years as an elementary teacher and reading specialist for the Omaha public schools, Adams jumped at the opportunity to help doctors prevent prescription errors when her former school superintendent, who also is the chairman of the board at the Children's Hospital, invited her to work with them.

"If a physician's writing is illegible, people can die," says Dr. Stephen Lazoritz, one of Adams' pupils.

Twenty percent of medication errors are due to handwriting that is misread, he says, admitting that his own handwriting was very poor before working with Adams.

Rushing and jumbling print and cursive writing are common errors of Adams' students. She usually advises them to print because it's clearer.

Her lessons start with an analysis of the doctor's writing sample. Then, she circles areas that need improvement and watches the doctor write. She'll point out that the letter j needs to hang below the line and emphasizes the need to "make tall letters tall and small letters small."

In one extreme case, Adams could read only a few of 100 words a doctor wrote. After practicing Adams' methods, he improved so much she could read 96 words out of 100.

Adams is proud to use her teaching skills to help save lives.

"There's no lesson plan to follow," she says. "I've done on-the-spot diagnosis from working with children needing remediation, so it comes naturally." ✔

—Lorinda Bullock

Photos by Charlie Cortez

Photos by Eric Francis

Final Reports of Campaign Revenues and Expenses

NEA Standing Rule 10.E provides as follows:

Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committee prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed pursuant to Rule 10.E.

Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidates for President

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$45,578.06
Groups within the state	250.00
Persons outside the state	6,823.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	22,978.00
Donations in kind	14,280.25
TOTAL	**$89,909.31**

EXPENSES

Printing	$49,454.58
Mailing	7,207.04
Other media materials	4,314.00
Hospitality and entertainment	4,307.54
Campaign Committee expenses	32,057.16
Giveaway(s) if any	24,473.14
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	6,663.09
TOTAL	**$128,476.55**

Signed: Denise Rockwell

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$46,344.00
Groups within the state	8,948.00
Persons outside the state	18,715.00
Groups outside the state	2,960.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	17,211.00
Donations in kind	540.68
TOTAL	**$94,718.68**

EXPENSES

Printing	$32,610.57
Mailing	7,498.83
Other media materials	18,539.22
Hospitality and entertainment	10,713.89
Campaign Committee expenses	3,814.83
Giveaway(s) if any	11,274.27
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	8,976.79
TOTAL	**$93,428.40**

Signed: Reg Weaver

Candidate for Vice President

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$4,863.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	5,435.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$10,298.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,799.00
Mailing	896.00
Other media materials	5,318.00
Hospitality and entertainment	985.00
Campaign Committee expenses	760.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	517.00
TOTAL	**$10,275.00**

Signed: Dennis Van Roekel

Candidates for Secretary-Treasurer

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$5,164.90
Groups within the state	652.15
Persons outside the state	6,485.00
Groups outside the state	1,000.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	5,337.65
Donations in kind	2,935.00
TOTAL	**$21,574.70**

EXPENSES

Printing	$6,855.81
Mailing	1,309.29
Other media materials	1,290.40
Hospitality and entertainment	240.22
Campaign Committee expenses	8,349.43
Giveaway(s) if any	1,583.63
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	**$19,628.78**

Signed: Lily Eskelsen

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$18,024.73
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	4,875.39
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,816.13
Donations in kind	3,292.42
TOTAL	**$28,008.67**

EXPENSES

Printing	$12,277.88
Mailing	4,709.93
Other media materials	110.00
Hospitality and entertainment	285.42
Campaign Committee expenses	14,500.00
Giveaway(s) if any	6,453.01
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	130.19
TOTAL	**$38,466.43**

Signed: Lee Ann Prielipp

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$7,370.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	850.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	4,158.00
Donations in kind	3,000.00
TOTAL	**$15,378.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$6,068.67
Mailing	0
Other media materials	937.51
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	7,390.64
Giveaway(s) if any	5,156.47
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,225.65
TOTAL	**$20,778.94**

Signed: Dan Sakota

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$3,838.30
Groups within the state	1,759.86
Persons outside the state	2,364.00
Groups outside the state	70.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,950.50
Donations in kind	1,223.00
TOTAL	**$11,205.66**

EXPENSES

Printing	$15,921.65
Mailing	5.20
Other media materials	3,669.01
Hospitality and entertainment	500.00
Campaign Committee expenses	4,763.19
Giveaway(s) if any	809.23
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,973.46
TOTAL	**$28,641.74**

Signed: Roger Sharp

Candidates for Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$5,005.00
Groups within the state	10,000.00
Persons outside the state	1,315.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,654.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$18,974.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$5,303.37
Mailing	306.00
Other media materials	5,453.30
Hospitality and entertainment	1,374.45
Campaign Committee expenses	3,994.32
Giveaway(s) if any	416.70
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	**$16,848.14**

Signed: Michael Billirakis

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$10,805.90
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	600.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,025.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$13,430.90**

EXPENSES

Printing	$4,025.00
Mailing	153.00
Other media materials	557.90
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	5,225.00
Giveaway(s) if any	2,940.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	530.00
TOTAL	**$13,430.90**

Signed: Glenn Johnson

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$3,000.00
Groups within the state	1,000.00
Persons outside the state	3,000.00
Groups outside the state	1,000.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	5,000.00
Donations in kind	2,000.00
TOTAL	**$15,000.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$10,000.00
Mailing	4,000.00
Other media materials	2,000.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	2,000.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	2,000.00
TOTAL	**$20,000.00**

Signed: Ignacio Salinas, Jr.

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,100.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	3,000.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,000.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$5,100.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$4,896.30
Mailing	1,437.94
Other media materials	300.00
Hospitality and entertainment	300.00
Campaign Committee expenses	3,097.37
Giveaway(s) if any	600.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	312.65
TOTAL	**$10,944.26**

Signed: Marsha Smith

Candidates for NEA Director, Higher Education At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$800.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$800.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$461.50
Mailing	0
Other media materials	258.50
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	80.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	**$800.00**

Signed: Thomas Green

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,322.10
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	365.00
TOTAL	**$1,687.10**

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,409.50
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	276.69
TOTAL	**$1,686.19**

Signed: Michael Ryan

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$340.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	582.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$922.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$462.000
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	415.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	70.00
TOTAL	**$947.00**

Signed: Ray Heideman

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$535.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	300.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$835.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$400.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	275.00
Campaign Committee expenses	135.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	**$810.00**

Signed: Sarah Horton

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At-Large continued

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$950.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	640.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$1,590.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$575.01
Mailing	92.00
Other media materials	800.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	150.00
TOTAL	**$1,617.01**

Signed: Annie Hutchison

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$745.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	425.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	529.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$1,699.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,276.00
Mailing	460.00
Other media materials	395.00
Hospitality and entertainment	110.00
Campaign Committee expenses	145.00
Giveaway(s) if any	510.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	242.00
TOTAL	**$3,138.00**

Signed: Rosemary Riley

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$320.00
Groups within the state	80.00
Persons outside the state	20.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	10.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$430.00**

EXPENSES

Printing	$506.00
Mailing	17.00
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s) if any	25.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	**$548.00**

Signed: Sharon Scott

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$0
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	**$0**

EXPENSES

Printing	$0
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	**$0**

Signed: Carolyn E. Smith

For Sale—Your Kids

The darker side of business' increasing involvement in schools.

EDUCATION, INC.: TURNING LEARNING INTO A BUSINESS (REVISED EDITION)
Edited by **Alfie Kohn** and **Patrick Shannon**
179 pp. $19 paperback; Heinemann (www.heinemann.com)

Since the 1980s, no one in public relations has flacked any harder than those pitching for the titans of American business.

No, I'm not talking about spinning recent corporate accounting scandals. I'm talking about the tidal wave of press detailing how businesses are bailing out the "failing" U.S. education system. One couldn't escape the accounts of corporate largesse—this firm donated its old (read: outmoded) computers for a literacy project; that one loaned its executives to teach public education officials how to be better managers (hmmm).

Readers of *Education, Inc.* might well conclude that business' interest in schools has been more than a little self-serving. If you believe that a public education system is essential to our common well-being, and that our private interests must occasionally play second fiddle to the common good, the authors whose work comprise *Education, Inc.* provide more than enough material to pique your outrage meter. It's hard to know what's most bothersome about American industry's forays into public education over the past two decades:

- Is it that kids are studying curriculums prepared by McDonald's® or Clearasil, or forced to sit through commercials thanks to the Faustian bargain their elders have struck with Channel One for free TVs?
- Or maybe that huge corporations—the same ones who benefit from sizable tax breaks—stand to reap enormous profits from the current explosion in testing.
- What about the way heady corporate chiefs elbowed their way into contracts managing public schools by promising high test scores at a cheaper cost—and then slunk out of town when they fell on their face, leaving debts and broken promises in their wake?

There's something in *Education, Inc.* for everyone who's ever felt uneasy about corporate logos on textbook covers or wondered whether there may be just a *hint* of a conflict in industry's increasingly aggressive and invasive stance.

Originally published in 1997, the new and updated essays in *Education, Inc.* have only become more timely given today's testing juggernaut and movement to "voucherize" American education.

The 15 essays cover the gamut of business involvement, from commercially inspired curriculums to charter schools. The most striking ones deal with testing. The stories spell out how our current obsession with testing is leading to an orgy of spending on not just the tests themselves, but related business-supplied services such as private test prep "learning centers." The testing explosion spells giant profits for private firms—at a time when public schools are chronically underfunded yet huge corporations pay CEOs obscene salaries and perks while skating with tax breaks.

The book's sections on choice and school-to-work programs are the weakest—tilting toward highbrow essays—but still contain some gems. Robert Lowe's fine essay on vouchers, for example, reminds us that the nation's first choice program—enacted after *Brown v. Board of Education*—permitted white students in Virginia to attend private segregated schools at public expense.

The writings leave no doubt that, while the economy may have soured of late, corporate presence in schools is stronger than ever. "When corporations can influence the nature of curriculum and the philosophy of education," Alfie Kohn writes, "then they have succeeded in doing something more profound and possibly more enduring than merely improving their results on this quarter's balance sheet." ✔

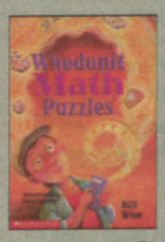
—John O'Neil

EXCERPT

"Let's connect the dots. Over here are corporations persuading public officials to reduce their tax obligations; over there are schools so starved for resources that they must resort to selling advertising space to companies....This must be what business means by a 'win-win' situation."

BOOKS by NEA Members

Whodunit Math Puzzles
By Bill Wise, illustrated by Lucy Corvino



Author Bill Wise takes a different approach to math in this book by including a series of crimes that must be solved using math and logic skills. Students can join Midville Police Chief Arthur Smart and his partner, 12-year-old junior detective Cal Q. Leiter as they investigate how much money Gertrude Gessler left in her will to divide among her four nephews and other mysteries. 96 pp. $6.95 from Sterling Publishing. To order, go to www.sterlingpublishing.com.

Acting for Nature: What Young People Around the World Have Done to Protect the Environment
By Sneed B. Collard III and Action for Nature

Read the adventures and real-life stories of young people and learn how they helped solve growing, worldwide environmental problems, such as overpopulation, pollution, global warming, and species extinction. 112 pp. $8.95 from Heyday Books. To order, call 510/549-3564 or e-mail orders@heydaybooks.com.

The Man Who Set the Town Dancing (El Hombre que puso a bailar a todo el pueblo)
By Candice Stanford, illustrated by Flo Hosa Dougherty

This bilingual (English/Spanish) book, written by a high school journalism teacher, tells the true story of José Tena, who popularized Mexican folk dances. Filled with color paintings rich in cultural detail, the book follows José as he fulfills his dream of bringing dance back into the townspeople's lives. 40 pp. $16.95 plus s&h from Clear Light Books. To order, call 888/253-2747 or go to www.clearlightbooks.com.

More Hot Links: Linking Literature With the Middle School Curriculum
By Cora M. Wright

The companion book to *Hot Links* by the same author, *More Hot Links* will help make book selection easy. Compiled by a middle school librarian, the book contains informative annotations and bibliographic information on more than 300 recently published fiction and nonfiction books that support and enhance the middle school curriculum for grades 4-10. 200 pp. $32 plus s&h from Libraries Unlimited. To order, call 303/770-1220, or go to www.lu.com.

For more NEA member books, visit the* NEA Today *website at www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Books by NEA Members Online."

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

What's the Hullabaloo?

Let students go global with a new bimonthly magazine, *Hullabaloo*, for children ages 7 to 13. Each issue explores a different country from a child's perspective. Colorful photos, puzzles, comics, games, science experiments, pull-out maps, and stories teach children while captivating their imaginations. Subscriptions cost $23 for one year (six issues) or $40 for two years. To subscribe, go to www.hullabaloomagazine.com or call 310/824-6566.

Celebrate Latin American Culture

Learn more about Latin American celebrations with the activities, crafts, and recipes in *25 Latino Craft Projects* by Ana-Elba Pavon and Diana Borrego. Each project focuses on a particular holiday and features step by step instructions with illustrations or photographs as well as background information and reading resources. The book contains activities for preschoolers, older children, and families. 82 pp. $30 from the American Library Association. To order, visit www.alastore.org.

Seeing the Big Picture

Look up. Look down. Look all around. Art educator Gillian Wolfe selected paintings from around the world and throughout art history to help readers develop the art of seeing a painting from different perspectives. *Look! Zoom in on Art!* makes art appreciation fun and new by unveiling the secrets behind the world's greatest paintings. 40 pp. $19.95 from Oxford University Press. To order, call 800/451-7556.

Just Ask

The publishers of *Cricket*, *Click*, and *Smithsonian* magazines have launched *Ask*, a colorful, bimonthly magazine for kids ages 7 to 10 that features the best in science, history, technology, and the arts. Readers explore questions such as Why do we sleep? and How were the great cathedrals built? Each issue includes cartoons, contests, suggested websites, projects, and book reviews. Subscriptions cost $23.95 for six issues. Go to www.cricketmag.com/ProductDetail.asp?pid=8 to subscribe or to www.cricketmag.com for more on Cricket Magazine Group's other publications.

Get Kids Laughing

Think libraries are stodgy? Guess again. In *Something Funny Happened at the Library: How to Create Humorous Programs for Children and Young Adults*, author Rob Reid suggests getting young people's attention by making them laugh. For teachers of students of all ages, the book includes an annotated bibliography that lists more than 300 of the funniest books available. 162 pp. $32 from the American Library Association. To order, call 866/746-7252 or visit www.alastore.ala.org.

Got George?

Invite a Founding Father into your classroom by requesting a free poster and teaching guide from the National Portrait Gallery. The poster is a color, museum quality reproduction of the "Landsdowne" portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart. The 30-page teaching guide includes lesson plans for grades 2-12 and is linked to national history standards.

The materials are available in conjunction with the eight-city tour of the 1796 portrait, currently on display in Los Angeles. The portrait can also be viewed at www.georgewashington.si.edu. The site serves as a resource for teachers, offering free teaching materials for all grade levels. To order the poster and guide, visit the website or call 866/674-5487.

Way To G.R.O.W. (Get Rid Of Worksheets): Motivating Games and Activity Formats for Use Across the Curriculum

By Debbie Hisam and Linda Seth

Combine examples provided in conventional workbooks with the activities in this book to promote active learning in your classroom. Designed for different levels of students, the activities create an atmosphere of collaborative competition that will encourage students to become more involved in learning. 106 pp. $24.95 from Etc. Publications. To order, call 800/839-8339.

From the NEA Professional Library

Coping with Standards, Tests, and Accountability: Voices from the Classroom
Allan A. Glatthorn and Jean Fontana
144 pp. $14.95 NEA members
$16.95 nonmembers
#2015-4-00-FN

EXCERPT

We learned that if you take a rich chunk of classroom practice and shake it, standards and benchmarks fall out. Standards linked to professional development in the context of classroom practice can be an impetus for teacher growth and improved student learning. As one of many examples, we looked at a year-long inquiry into immigration I had conducted with my students. The culminating project was a whole-class publication called Coming to America, written by parents and students.

No concern in current American education is as baffling or polarizing as the standards movement. Raising test scores, improving student performance, and evaluating teachers are issues hotly debated in every community, and attempts at reform are initiated every season with widely varying outcomes. In 12 well-referenced chapters, teachers, teacher educators, and administrators share their views on and experiences with accountability, testing, and standards programs in school districts throughout the nation.

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books

TVTIPS

Anne Frank: The Life of a Young Girl

A&E, A&E Biography, March 3, 7 a.m., check local listings.

Her diary, an inspiring testament to the strength of the human spirit under the worst of conditions, is one of the most widely read books in the world. Yet the time Anne Frank spent hiding from the Nazis is just one part of her memorable life.

In this one-hour documentary, scholars and survivors tell what they know of the young Jewish girl who has become a worldwide icon. Learn about Anne from her happy early years in Germany and Holland, through her time in hiding and her horrifying last months in Nazi death camps, to the legacy and message of hope her diary has left for the world. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

Anne Frank House

TV Tips are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and from Cable in the Classroom at www.ciconline.org.

TVTIPS

The Alamo

History Channel, March 3 and 4, 6 a.m., ET, check local listings.
This two-part program uses eyewitness accounts and dramatic reenactments to create an accurate picture of one of America's most famous battles. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with a lesson plan available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

Amelia Earhart: Queen of the Air

A&E, March 11, 7 a.m., ET.
Using recently discovered documents concerning her disappearance in 1937, this episode of *A&E Biography* explores the myths and mystery surrounding the celebrated aviator whose style attracted the attention of the public as much as her many record-breaking flights.

Intimate Portrait: Eleanor Roosevelt

Lifetime, March 12, 4 a.m., ET, check local listings.
This documentary profiles one of America's most influential women, from her youthful insecurity to her emergence as the "First Lady of the World" and a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year. Teaching materials are available at www.lifetimetv.com/community/olc/cable/index.html.

Celebrating the Green: The History of Saint Patrick's Day

History Channel, March 14, 6 a.m., ET.
Using New York City's annual St. Patrick's Day parade as a backdrop, this documentary explains how the ancient feast day honoring the bishop who Christianized Ireland became a boisterous celebration of Irish heritage in America. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

Lewis and Clark: A Scientific Journey

Discovery Channel, March 17, 9 a.m., ET.
Uncovering more than 600 historic campsites, this program chronicles the journey of the two men who were assigned the task of exploring the vast wilderness of the Louisiana Purchase. Tape the show and use it in the classroom for one year with a lesson plan available at www.school.discovery.com.

Weather on Mars

Discovery Channel, March 20, 9 a.m., ET.
In this program, scientists in the Mojave Desert attempt to determine what triggers the dust storms that rage across Mars by simulating the 200-mile-per-hour Martian winds. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year with a lesson plan available at www.school.discovery.com.

2001 The Discovery Channel

Right on Track

The Disney Channel, March 21, 8 p.m., ET.
Based on the real-life experiences of Erica and Courtney Enders, this movie follows the drag racing adventures of the Houston-based Enders family. The movie depicts a young girl, who at age eight is inspired by her father's love for racecars and quickly becomes the only girl driver in the National Hot Rod Association. Her younger sister, Courtney, eventually follows in her footsteps. Enders shepherds his daughters' careers, teaching them the meaning of determination, perseverance, and the importance of family values.

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ZOOM

PBS KIDS, Monday, March 31, and weekdays, check local listings.
In its fifth season, ZOOM focuses on volunteerism and cultural diversity. New episodes are infused with the richness of cultures from around the world as the young cast members work together to solve problems, experiment, and bring to life ideas sent in by kids from across the country. Featured in this premiere episode are crafts and recipes from other countries and profiles of kids who share their unique cultures from making a traditional Japanese carp flag to the creation of a pannukakkua—Finnish pancakes. Visit the website that includes educational materials at www.pbskids.org/zoom.

Cyberchase

PBS KIDS, Monday, March 31; (airs daily, check local listings).
This cartoon mystery series takes kids on a wild ride through cyberspace where they are challenged to use the power of math. Topics for this season include equivalent fractions, counter examples, angle measurement, inverse operations, perimeter/area, data clusters, ballpark estimation, and decimals. In this episode, the kids challenge the villain Hacker to an Olympic-like skate-off competition to prevent his mission to conquer the virtual universe. Teacher materials are available from www.pbskids.org/cyberspace.

Max & Ruby

Nickelodeon, weekdays 9 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Based on the books by Rosemary Wells, each half-hour animated episode consists of three seven-and-a-half minute stories targeted to preschoolers that celebrate the universal nature of sibling relationships. The series follows Max and his big sister Ruby through their everyday lives in the village of East Bunnyhop. Max and Ruby are often at odds, but their humor, determination, and affection for each other ultimately help them to triumph over the challenges of being little.

WEB WINNERS

Women's History Month

Find resources and materials to teach about Women's History Month at the National Women's History Project webpage. The site includes listings of women's history organizations and museums, an online catalog of teaching resources, biographies of notable women, a history quiz, and more. Information on this year's history month theme, "Women Pioneering the Future," is also included. Go to www.nwhp.org.

Your window on the world of women's history
ENTER
National Women's History Project
Recognizing and Celebrating Women's Accomplishments

Women in the Arts

The National Museum of Women in the Arts is the only museum dedicated exclusively to recognizing the contributions of women artists.

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More States Coming in 2003...

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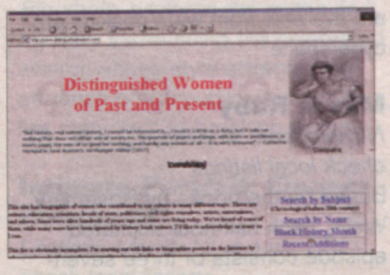
Visitors to its website can view works from the permanent collection, along with information on special exhibits and artist biographies. Go to www.nmwa.org.

Distinguished Women of Past and Present

Biographies of women writers, educators, scientists, heads of state, politicians, civil rights crusaders,



artists, entertainers, and others are featured at this site. Searchable by name or subject area, the webpage includes a list of additional resources. Go to www.distinguishedwomen.com.

Teaching with Energy

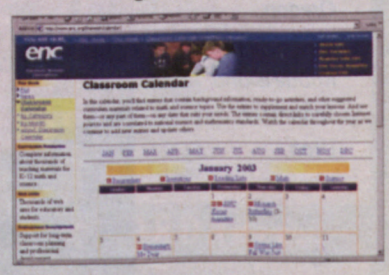
This site helps kids explore the link between solid waste and energy, the history of garbage, how landfills work, and related topics. Biographies of pioneers in energy and "energy news you can use" are also offered. Educators can find curriculum guides, science fair project ideas, an energy conversion chart, and more under the Classroom Connection heading. Go to www.eia.doe.gov/kids/index.html.

For Science Buffs

Have students choose from 16 activities to answer questions such as: How do scientists measure the size of an atom? What kind of coat will keep you the warmest—one made from cotton, steel wool, or air? Flash cards, matching games, and crossword puzzles help students learn the periodic table of elements and other science information. Middle school teachers are invited to apply for a four-week summer enrichment program in basic physics. Go to http://education.jlab.org/index.html.

Classroom Calendar

This free feature of the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse identifies and provides effective resources for K-12 math and science teaching and learning. At this site, you'll find ready-to-go activities and other suggested curriculum materials related to math and science. Use the entries to enrich your lessons on any date that suits your needs. The entries contain direct links to carefully chosen Internet sources and are correlated to national science and mathematics standards. Go to www.enc.org/thisweek/calendar/.



Dino Lab

Give dinosaur research projects a boost by visiting the Dino Lab site from The Jurassic Park Institute, a science-based, education-focused program. The site includes lesson plans and student activities in which students develop a greater under-

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The NEA Valuebuilder® Variable Annuity TSA is a variable annuity issued by Security Benefit Life Insurance Company (Policy Form V6029) and distributed by Security Distributors, Inc. For more complete information, obtain a prospectus from Security Distributors, Inc. and read it carefully before investing or sending money.
The NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund TSA is a Custodial Account that makes available various mutual funds for investment. For more complete information about the mutual funds in which the Custodial Account invests obtain a prospectus from Security Distributors, Inc. and read it carefully before investing or sending money.
Investing in mutual funds and annuities involves risk and there is no guarantee of investment results.
While taxes on the amounts that you have invested are deferred until withdrawn, withdrawals prior to age 59 1/2 may be subject to a 10% IRS penalty tax. Conversely, earnings from an investment that does not offer tax-deferral are taxed currently, and withdrawals from such an investment are not subject to the penalty tax.
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VBNT0303

standing of the scientific method. An online encyclopedia, dinosaur-themed activities and games, the latest in dinosaur news, and additional links round out this dino resource. Go to www.jpinstitute.com.

QuestionPoint

Partially administered and maintained by the Library of Congress, QuestionPoint is a collaborative online reference service that provides libraries with a global network of reference librarians. Patrons can log on and submit questions that will be answered by the most qualified librarian. This service is available to libraries through subscription, and will encourage the sharing of resources and expertise with

patrons free of charge. Go to www.questionpoint.org.

English To Go

International issues change daily, and incorporating them into lesson plans can be overwhelming. With English To Go, you can download reproducible lesson plans based on recent news stories from Reuters and add

them to your curriculum. A free subscription to the site includes access to a weekly newsletter and learning activity. Go to www.english-to-go.com/english/sample_lessons.cfm.

For the Birds

This National Wildlife Federation site can help anyone become an expert on the bird species in various regions of the United States. Colorful maps help track migration patterns, along with illustrations—essential tools for even the most amateur bird-watcher. Make area birds feel welcome with the guide to favorite foods, types of trees, and the most attractive feeder styles—for the birds, that is. Go to www.enature.com/birding/migration_home.asp.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Know a Friend of Education?

Nominations for the NEA Friend of Education Award are due *April 1, 2003.* Nominations will be evaluated based on award criteria—leadership acts and support of education on a national level that establish the nominee as a true friend of education, education employees, or students.

Nomination letters must include:

- name of the nominee
- nominee's position and/or organizational affiliation
- nominee's mailing address (or organization mailing address)
- name of the nominator or affiliate
- signature of nominator or affiliate officer
- name of nominator's local affiliate, if applicable
- nominator's mailing address
- nominator's telephone number.

If the nominator is an NEA member, send proof of membership (such as an *NEA Today* mailing label that includes a membership number)

In 100 words or less, indicate the

NEA Members...

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1 Make sure you're at the computer where you'll be doing your online shopping

2 Go to **http://www.schoolcash.com/owlshopper** and install OWL*Shopper* or visit **www.owl.org** and click on OWL*Shopper* in the Marketplace—it's FREE!

3 Shop as you normally would at 250+ of your favorite online retailers

That's it! Upon installing OWL*Shopper*, you are entered for the Grand Prize Alaskan Cruise for two! The drawing will be May 15, 2003.

OWL.ORG
Our Web Location for Education

Some of our participating retailers:

1-800-Flowers, Amazon, Barnes&Noble.com, Buy.com, Chadwick's of Boston, Childcraft, Coldwater Creek, Cooking.com, Dell, Disney Store, Eddie Bauer, Expedia, Flower.com, JCPenney, JJill, Lands' End, Lillian Vernon, L.L. Bean, Microwarehouse, Newport News, Nordstrom, Office Depot, Oriental Trading Co., Payless Shoes, Sharper Image, Spiegel, Teacher Created Materials

AK MAY 15.03

Happy Birthday, Education International

For 10 years, Education International (EI) has been fighting to gain a quality public education for every child and to promote the human rights and trade union rights of education employees worldwide.

Thanks to the collective efforts of its affiliates—including NEA—EI has fought for:

- **the responsibility of governments, the World Bank, and UNESCO to ensure that *all* children receive an education**
- **the release of a wrongly imprisoned leader of the Ethiopian Teachers Association and an end to government-sponsored persecution of the union**
- **the safety of Colombian teacher unionists whose lives have been threatened.**

EI has also worked tirelessly to support African teachers confronted with poverty and HIV/AIDS.

NEA was a founding member of EI in 1993. Today, the organization combines the power of 25 million members belonging to 311 affiliates in 159 countries and territories. For more information on EI's work and NEA's partnership with this organization, visit www.ei-ie.org and www.nea.org/international/ei.html.

10 YEARS • ANS • AÑOS
1993-2003

reason for your nomination and summarize the nominee's qualifications for the award. Supporting materials, such as publications or videos, may be submitted along with the nomination information.

Submit all nomination information and materials to: NEA Friend of Education Award Committee; Executive Office; National Education Association; 1201 16th Street, N.W.; Washington, DC 20036; Attn: Carol Adams. Nomination information may also be faxed to 202/822-7012.

Eye on Bugs

Get up close and personal with insects by taking part in the Bugscope project—an educational outreach program for K-12 classrooms. The project provides a resource to classrooms so they may remotely operate a scanning electron microscope to image "bugs" at high magnification. Students can remotely control the microscope in real time from a classroom computer over the Internet using a Web browser.

This state-of-the-art microscope resource can be readily integrated into classroom activities. The classroom has ownership of the project—they design their own experiment and provide their own bugs to be imaged in the microscope. Participation in the Bugscope project is free. For more, go to http://bugscope.beckman.uiuc.edu/.

Space Day 2003

Dedicated to advancing science, math, engineering, and technology, Space Day inspires young people to realize the vision of our space pioneers. Students can participate in an array of Space Day educational programs and activities focused on the future of flight. This year's programs include Design Challenges for grades 4-8, where students collaborate to create solutions to the challenges of living in space; Student Signatures in Space®, which sends digitized student signatures on a space shuttle mission; and Cyber Space Day℠, the only annual Webcast entirely devoted to science, space, and math. Space Day 2003: Celebrating the Future of Flight will be officially celebrated on May 1, but teachers can find activities, lesson plans, and more at www.spaceday.com.

Chocolate's Hidden Costs

In 2001, shocking reports of child slave labor on West African cocoa farms spurred the U.S. chocolate industry to start eliminating the abuse. But there's still a long way to go. Students can learn about this issue and help by participating in Global Exchange's Fair Trade campaign. Chocolate produced under the Fair Trade label guarantees a minimum price per pound of cocoa for farmers, prohibits child slavery and forced labor, and ensures that children have the opportunity to attend school.

To help educate youngsters, Global Exchange offers Fair Trade activity books and action guides for K-12 students. The free materials can be downloaded at www.globalexchange.org/cocoa. For more information, contact Melissa Schweisguth, Fair Trade coordinator, at melissa@globalexchange.org or 415/575-5538.

Time To Get Your Crayons and Your Pencils

PicturePages is back. PicturePages Partnership LLC, has launched Bill Cosby's "PicturePages—Early Learning Readiness Series." Based on the TV show, the series contains 28 interactive educational games that develop and evaluate the cognitive skills of children ages three to six.

Select episodes are available on CD-ROM, DVD, or for play on the Internet at www.PicturePages.com. Children may also choose the original method of learning by watching the shows on VHS, and using PicturePages activity books and playbooks.

Each computer game begins with an original episode of the TV show, followed by interactive games that reinforce the learning concepts explained by Cosby. By playing the games, children will develop skills in logic and reasoning, concept formation, visual perception/discrimination, auditory discrimination, visual-motor coordination, and verbal comprehension/communication.

Online subscriptions to the series, are available at www.PicturePages.com for $29.95. The series can be ordered online on CD-ROM or DVD, starting at $29.95, or on VHS with an accompanying PicturePages playbook starting at $12.95. For phone orders, call 877/774-2887.

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Paul Gorski, Gene-Tey Shin, and Martha Green, Editors

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Resources for a Multicultural Classroom
Martha Green, Joyce Blakley, Sybille Scott, Deborah Stuart, Gene-Tey Shin, and Paul Gorski, Editors

If you're ready to make celebrating diversity more than Taco Tuesdays, open this book to any page for great ideas. This second volume in the Multicultural Resource Series offers annotated print, video, and electronic resource lists to help you plan K-12 programs that tie the strengths of diversity and inclusion with your prescribed curriculum. You'll also find names and addresses of organizations and agencies that help you successfully build multicultural information and viewpoints into ongoing programs.

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DIVERSITY Calendar

March

Women's History Month
From Amelia Earhart to Oprah Winfrey, women are celebrated this month for their incredible contributions in American history. Women in America have been especially instrumental in securing women the right to vote and ensuring equal pay, equal treatment, and the right to be heard. For more, visit www.Timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/articles/0,6709,101044,00.html.

March 4—Mardi Gras
Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday" in French) is a day long celebration of food, wines, parades, costume parties, and tons of beads. The biggest Mardi Gras festival in the United States is held in New Orleans. Known as Carnival in other parts of the world, Mardi Gras is the last day of feasting before the holy season of Lent. For more, visit www.holidays.net/mardigras.

March 21 (begins at sunset on March 20)—Naw Rúz
On the first day of spring, this Baha'i celebration marks the beginning of the new year with symbols of spring and renewal. This day is considered one of the nine holy days of the year where work and school are suspended for Baha'is. For more, see www.religioustolerance.org/bahai.htm.

April

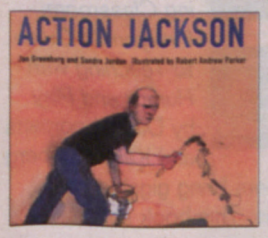
April 9—Winston Churchill Day
Winston Churchill (1874-1965) served as prime minister of Great Britain from 1940-1955. Churchill was an instrumental leader for England and formed alliances with the U.S. and Russia to defeat the Germans in World War II. For more, visit www.winstonchurchill.org.

April 29—Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom HaShoah)
The Holocaust is one of the most painful experiences in Jewish history. From 1939 to 1945 over six million Jews were killed in death camps during World War II. Yom HaShoah is a day to honor the memory of those who died and to celebrate the lives of those who survived. To learn more, visit www.torah.org/learning/yomtov/holocaust or www.jewish.com/holidays/yomh.shtml.

April 27—Freedom Day, South Africa
On this day in 1994, South Africans participated in their first democratic elections. After years of apartheid rule, Black South Africans were allowed to vote and elected a new president. South Africans remember this day with an annual celebration. For more, visit http://scnc.udw.ac.za/doc/SOC-cult/holidays/freedomday.htm.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Art in Action
Authors Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan bring New York artist Jackson Pollock to life in *Action Jackson*, a children's book that follows Pollock's artistic process from paint-splattered shoes at the edges of a blank canvas to the famous paintings that made New York art galleries famous. The watercolor illustrations honor Pollock's painting style. 32 pp. $23.90 from Roaring Brook Press. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com.



Crafts for Nature-Lovers
Make a lamp from an olive oil can, a wallet from old jeans, or a mosaic tray from broken dishes. *Earth-Friendly Crafts for Kids: 50 Awesome Things to Make with Recycled Stuff* by Heather Smith with Joe Rhatigan shows kids how to recycle the things they were about to trash into something new and exciting. 144 pp. $24.95 from Lark Books. To order, call 800/805-5489.

Teaching Energy Efficiency
The Better Way To Save In-School Program can help teachers demonstrate how to cut energy costs while protecting the environment. Suitable for fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms, the kit contains classroom and home-based activities such as Math Mania, in which students work together to solve challenging math problems based on real-life situations while learning the value of energy efficiency.

The kits are sponsored by electric and gas utility companies and efficiency organizations, and all lesson plans, activities, and experiments align with national standards in language arts, science, and math. To download versions of this program, visit www.betterwaytosave.com.

Changing Seasons
Lily's grandparents moved to California, and she won't see them for a whole year. They keep in touch through letters about oranges in January, daffodils in April, pumpkins in October, and evergreens in December. *Lily's Garden* by Deborah

Fighting for the Right Goals

Worthy goals are worth fighting for.

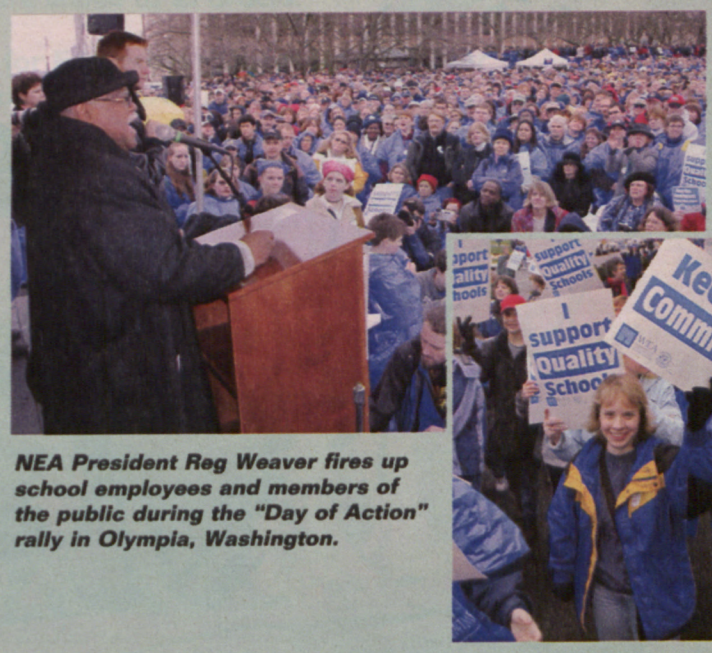
NEA President Reg Weaver traveled West in January with the message that quality public education for all children is achievable—if we fight hard enough for it.

Weaver carried the message to Washington state, where he spoke in Olympia at a rally organized by the Washington Education Association (WEA). Rallies at three sites during WEA's "Day of Action" drew an estimated 30,000 school employees and community members to show support for adequate school funding. Like other states, Washington is facing a huge budget shortfall, and politicians are weighing cuts to vital public school programs.

"We utterly reject the notion that America cannot afford to provide every child in this nation with a quality public education," Weaver told those attending the Olympia rally. Politicians are fond of saying that the money's not available to support adequate school funding, but somehow they come up with the dollars for corporate subsidies, the war against Iraq, and tax cuts that benefits mostly the wealthy, Weaver noted.

"We can afford modern, well-equipped schools that provide all children with an environment that is safe and conducive to good education," Weaver thundered to the cheering crowd. "We can afford smaller class sizes to allow teachers to devote more individual attention to students. And we can afford a compensation system that will attract and retain the kind of people we want working with our students."

Later, Weaver told attendees at the Western Regional Leadership Conference in Salt Lake City that NEA has both the numbers—2.7 million members, or one in every hundred Americans—and the "fighting spirit" to prevail in the battle to secure adequate funding for public schools. "Our members know how to organize, mobilize, and energize," said Weaver. "Most importantly, they know how to fight."



Dale Folkerts/WEA

NEA President Reg Weaver fires up school employees and members of the public during the "Day of Action" rally in Olympia, Washington.

What's the battle plan? Weaver is mobilizing NEA to follow a three-part strategy for addressing the needs of American public schools:

1. Every child must have access to a safe, orderly school, with an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.
2. We need meaningful reform that is done with us and by us—the folks on the front lines.
3. We need salaries and incentives to attract an adequate supply of highly qualified teachers and support professionals.

Achieving the vision of quality public education for all children will mean holding politicians and legislators accountable for ensuring educators have adequate resources to do the job. In fact, Weaver said he'd like the federal government to expand its plan to measure schools by the yardstick of adequate yearly progress toward student achievement goals. "We should also have a second report," he said, "to assess whether a state is making 'adequate yearly progress' toward achieving school funding that is adequate and equitable."

In sum, Weaver said, "We want every school to be as good as our best public school."

That's a goal worth fighting for.

—John O'Neil

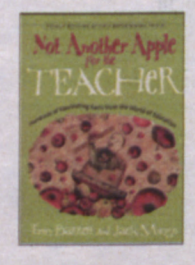
Kogan-Ray brings to life the 12 months in one girl's garden. Suitable for K-3 kids, this picture book also offers gardening tips and recipes for youngsters. 32 pp. $23.90 from Roaring Brook Press. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com.

A Broken Promise

When the Supreme Court declared segregation in schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, segregation was supposed to end. For a while the victory was evident, but

through the years segregation has once again begun to show its teeth. These are author Peter Irons' sentiments in *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision*. The book explores the 150-year history of segregation in schools by recounting court testimonials, the five cases that produced the Brown decision, and feedback from Black and white students who now attend the same schools once segregated by law. 347 pp. $29.95 from Viking. To order, call 800/788-6262.

Lessons Not Learned

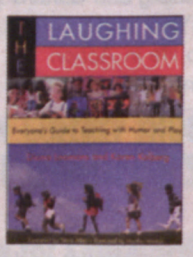


Did you know three U.S. presidents were grammar school dropouts? Or that preschoolers polled in 1990 would have elected Mr. Rogers as president? Erin Barrett and Jack Mingo compiled hundreds of little known facts about education in *Not Another Apple for the Teacher: Hundreds of Fascinating Facts from the World of Education*. 246 pp. $12.95 from Conari Press. To order, visit www.conari.com or call 800/685-9595.

What Makes Us Beautiful?

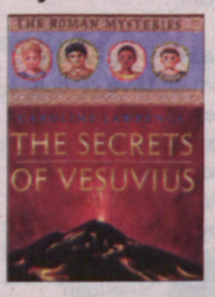
That special something within every person is celebrated in Etan Boritzer's *What Is Beautiful?*, a life concept book that helps children question the definition of beauty. The multicultural illustrations drive home the idea that beauty can be found in many different places. 32 pp. $14.95 from Veronica Lane Books. To order, call 800/651-1001.

Classroom Giggles



Need a good laugh in the classroom? *The Laughing Classroom: Everyone's Guide to Teaching with Humor and Play* by Diana Loomans and Karen Kolberg helps teachers bring giggles into their lessons. This book shows teachers how to use humor to inspire creativity in students. 240 pp. $15.95 from New World Library. To order, call 800/97-BOOKS or visit www.newworldlibrary.com.

Mysteries in Rome



Four friends spend the summer near Pompeii where Mount Vesuvius is about to erupt and are quickly caught up in a mysterious riddle and a hunt for treasure. Caroline Lawrence's *The Secrets of Vesuvius* is the second installment in a mystery series for middle schoolers that takes place in Ancient Rome. 192 pp. $22.90 from Roaring Brook Press. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com.

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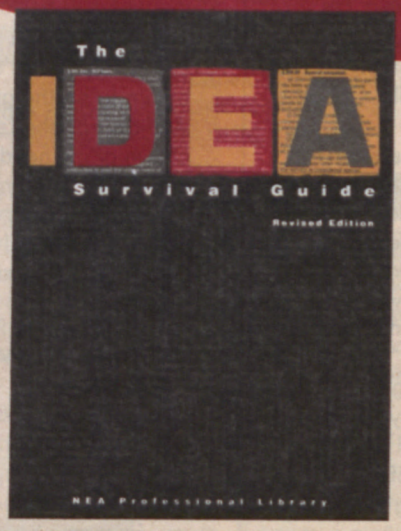
What's the big IDEA?



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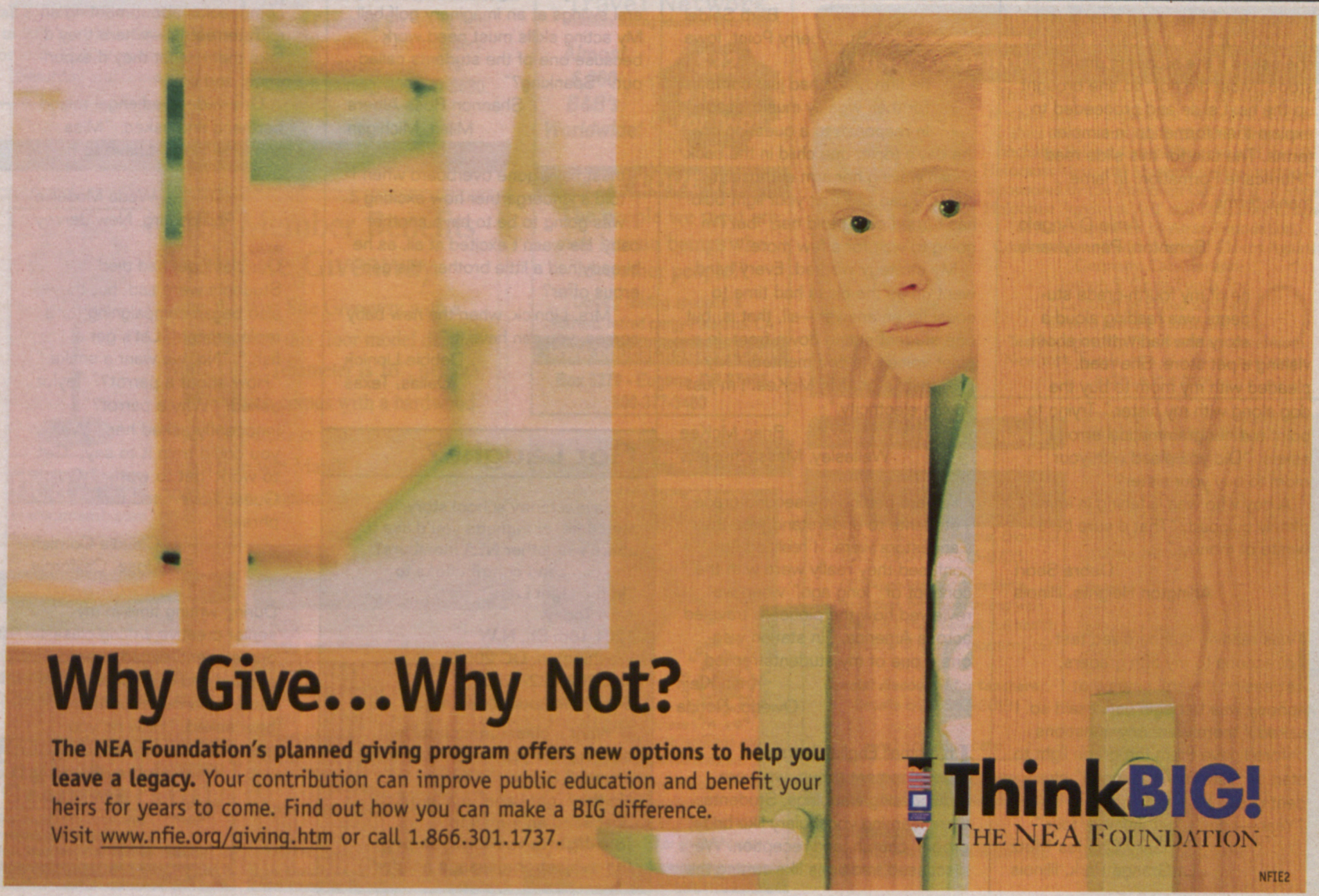

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NFIE2

in the Light Lane

Dumbing Down

As part of my meteorology unit, my ninth-grade students were required to teach the class about their selected topic. One young lady had created a wonderful Power Point® presentation on hurricanes. After giving a technical definition of how hurricanes formed, she asked if the students understood. Most did not, so she brought up the next slide and proceeded to explain their formation in simpler terms. The title for this slide read "Hurricane Formation: In lame man's terms."

Amie D'Angelo
Scranton, Pennsylvania

One of my fourth-grade students was reading aloud a story she had written about visiting a pet store. She read, "I pleaded with my mom to buy the dog along with my sister." Trying to point out her grammatical error, I asked, "Did you plead with your mom to buy your sister?"

A boy who was listening in immediately quipped, "That'd sure be a waste of money!"

Debra Short
Arlington Heights, Illinois

I was reading standardized test directions to my fifth graders, stressing several times that nobody was to begin until I said so. I asked if there were any questions before I gave them the green light to start. A "listening-challenged" student raised his hand and said, "Yeah—I don't 'get' number four."

Gary Charles Metz
La Grange Park, Illinois

When you know it may be time to retire.... In this age of VCRs and DVDs, we were having a party in my kindergarten classroom. As we prepared for musical chairs, I asked a mother of one of my students to operate the record player. She took one look at it and said, "I don't know how to run one of those."

Barb Seidel
Strawberry Point, Iowa

The fifth grade had just come in for their weekly music lesson. In response to a question on the day's topic, one child in the back began waving her arm enthusiastically. "I can see that your light bulb has turned on," I told her, "but I'm going to wait for a few more."

My strategy worked. Every hand went up as the class had time to consider an answer—all, that is, but one student sitting down front. In a quiet voice she commented, "My light bulb is on, Mr. McKee. I'm just saving electricity."

Brian McKee
Wellesley, Massachusetts

It's hard getting my second-grade students to understand who their ancestors were. I realized how confused they really were with the concept of "long ago" when we reviewed how the pioneers traveled across America. "In station wagons," one of my students replied.

Kristi Klein
Oviedo, Florida

In a small English language development group, we were discussing weddings. Students were learning vocabulary like bride, groom, church, and reception. We discussed traditions like cutting the cake, tossing rice, and throwing the bouquet. A young man said he saw the bride throw a bouquet once. I asked him if he knew what the item the groom threw was called. He said, "Yeah, the panties."

Tina Costantino-Lane
Chino Hills, California

I was supervising recess when I saw a boy pushing other students. When I told him I needed to talk to him in private, he mouthed a very negative comment toward me and said, "I'm not going anywhere with you." I told him if he didn't come, I'd have to call his mother. "Let's go, this should be fun," he goaded. "I can't wait for her to tell you off—she's tired of the school picking on her kids." Once in the office, I had him call her. His opening? "Hi, Mom, I have detention tonight."

Dan Dunn
Lancaster, Wisconsin

As a resource room teacher, I co-teach daily in a seventh-grade science class. Recently, the science teacher was trying to explain a physics concept. To illustrate, he told the class to imagine his favorite summer sport. Trying to guess the sport, students tried swimming, baseball, and tennis.

I thought I'd offer a hint. Standing behind my colleague, I mimed several swings at an imaginary golf ball. My acting skills must need work because one of the students called out: "Spanking?"

Shannon Ross-Albers
Milan, Michigan

I must have gone overboard when I told a kindergartner how exciting it was going to be to have another baby. He wasn't excited at all, as he already had a little brother. His generous offer?

"Mrs. Lipnick, when the new baby comes, you can have it."

Debbie Lipnick
Dallas, Texas

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane"
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● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your e-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an e-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

Wee Advice

I was on morning hall duty. A prekindergartner approached me with a shoelace dangling. "Mr. Kircher, can you tie my shoe?" I kneeled down and began to tie the girl's shoe. As I did so, she tapped the crown of my head with her little finger and announced, "Getting a little thin up here." I thanked her for her advisement and sent her on her way!

Peter Kircher
Austin, Texas

Due to repairs, our public address system had been crackling annoyingly for most of the class period. One of my freshmen boys asked, "Why is the P.A. system so noisy?"

Being an English teacher, I tried a creative response. "Maybe aliens are listening in for signs of intelligent life."

The boy brightened, "They won't find any in here!"

Dawn Bratt Bohm
Schofield, Wisconsin

Years ago, when the movie *E.T.* was popular, I asked my young students to write a composition about meeting an extraterrestrial—where they'd take them, what they'd experience, and so on.

One wide-eyed angel raised her hand and asked, "Miss Mosellie, does it have to be true?"

Weda Mosellie
Phillipsburg, New Jersey

Our class pet had died. Students were sad, but they also began campaigning for a replacement. "Let's get a fish." "No, we want a snake." "How about a parrot?" Taylor asked. "Why a parrot?" I innocently asked her. "Well, you could train it to say: 'Get to work, get to work.'" Gulp! Guess I overused that phrase.

Claudia Cornish
San Jose, California

During writing time in my senior creative writing class, one student leaned over to a friend and in a soft voice just loud enough for me to hear asked, "How do you spell VCR?"

Jeffrey Peterson
Everly, Iowa

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